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OUR HERITAGE  
AND  
ITS SIGNIFICANCE



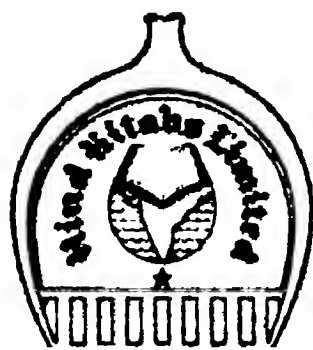


# OUR HERITAGE

AND

## ITS SIGNIFICANCE

SHRIPAD RAMA SHARMA



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## P R E F A C E

THIS BOOK is the outcome of some talks I gave to British troops in India, as part of an Information Series arranged by the Military Authorities, now about three years ago. The subject then announced was 'Indian Civilization' and the talks were followed up by discussion with the listeners. The organizers seemed to be satisfied enough with the result to suggest that the substance might be published for the edification of a wider circle of readers. But the theme as presented here has, through lapse of time and more deliberate reflection than was possible in the circumstances of its origin, undergone considerable changes of form and illustration as well as substance, though the main thesis or viewpoint still remains the same.

I am aware that the subject is too profound and difficult for popular treatment. Nevertheless, I have ventured to make the attempt without, I hope, provoking scholars very greatly. I must of course apologize forthwith for the defects of diacritical marking, which I had intended to exclude for the sake of simplicity, but which crept in almost unawares in the course of printing, with all the shortcomings of an unplanned entry.

I am grateful to my colleagues Dr. R. N. Dandekar and Dr. V. V. Gokhale for the interest they showed and the assistance they rendered to me in various ways in the preparation of this work. While I have undoubtedly benefited by their critical suggestions, I

own full responsibility for what is presented here with all its imperfections.

The illustrations were chosen with the assistance of Dr. Gokhale. That from Mt. Abu has been reproduced with the kind permission of the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras. The design on the cover, which aims at the pictorial symbolization of the cosmic perspectives, implied in the SIGNIFICANCE of OUR HERITAGE, is the work of Mr. B. G. Bhurke of Kala Bhavan, Satara.

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**BRAHMA : CHINESE VERSION**

## INTRODUCTION

*‘ Whatsoever is glorious, good, beautiful and mighty,—  
understand that it goes from out of a fragment of my  
splendour.’*

BHAGAVAD GITA

INDIA today, like the rest of the world, is in the ‘ melting pot ’ ; what will come out of it must necessarily depend upon the ‘ Vision ’ our generation brings to bear on the tasks confronting it. Today, more than in any other age, our destiny is linked up with that of others, closely and inextricably. Everywhere people are hotly discussing ‘ plans of reconstruction ’ : national as well as international. But because the need is universal, it does not mean that its satisfaction too must be through identical means. Though we are living in a ‘ slogan-ridden ’ world wherein many nostrums are powerfully advertised, we may not take the standardised prescriptions at their face-value. There is no panacea that can possess universal efficacy, without reference to the particular requirements of varying natures. He would indeed be a mad physician who would force the same remedy on all his patients, without caring to undertake a

searching diagnosis and adjust his treatment to the peculiar needs of the individual case. Nations have their individualities no less than persons, and these claim to be recognised as well as respected, during periods of ailment, even more than during periods of health. In an ailing world, therefore, the work of rehabilitation ought to begin with a basic study of the ' history of the case, ' no less than that of the immediate symptoms. It is in this spirit that the present survey of OUR HERITAGE is undertaken ; but it will be found to be, not the nauseating description of a chronic illness so much as the hope-inspiring record of a state of national health. The memory of a wholesome past (especially when it shows undiminished vitality, sustained through all the crises of history), such as that of India, becomes, at once, an invigorating tonic to ourselves and an encouraging example for others.

National reconstruction is a vital process, and the secrets of rejuvenation and growth are to be found not outside, but inside the nation. It is organic and depends upon the continuous flow of the life-blood which its heart alone is capable of perennially pumping. Hopes of recovery, consequently, are centred in the heart, though the stream of life flows through the entire body and all its limbs. Is the heart of India sound ? This little instrument of a book attempts to feel the pulse, and its reading will show that, if there be any disconcerting symptoms, they are confined to the surface, and need not be considered alarming if care is taken betimes. But the anatomy, as well as the physiology, of our body politic, needs to be carefully studied ; nor may the national psychology be overlooked or neglected. OUR HERITAGE seeks to go into all these factors, to the extent that its smallness of compass will permit. In fact,

it attempts to assess the *milieu* of our civilisation, in all its aspects, to gauge the strength of its vital corpuscles, and to indicate their power of assimilation as well as resistance.

Self-study and introspection, no less than the surrounding conditions, are the prerequisites of self-realisation. Without being blind to the latter, in which are implied the realities of the world outside India, and their impacts on ourselves, the lights have been mainly focused here on internal matters. Modern India draws her sustenance essentially from her own national resources, though she is neither so foolish nor so parochial as to be absolutely self-centred. In Rabindranath's telling simile, India is like an army which, while it is marching forward, is being continually fed from the rear. Or, as Mahatma Gandhi has put it : " Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards."

The central purpose of this book, its governing motive, is to assist in this ' understanding backwards ' with a view to ' living forwards. ' But the task involved in it is like the churning of the mythical Ocean in our *Puranas* : *Devas* and *Asuras* were engaged in that herculean endeavour, and the process brought out poison, as well as nectar and valuable gems. However, Shiva swallowed the poison and saved all from its deadly effects. So, too, in the churning of the ocean of Indian Civilisation, we have had our Max Müllers and Woodroffes on the side of the gods, with the Katherine Mayos and Beverley Nicholsons ranged on the opposite side. The latter could only discover the poison, for

Errors like straws upon the surface flow ;  
He who would search for pearls, must dive below.

It is interesting to remember that Dryden wrote these lines in his Prologue to *All for Love* ; and where it is not a case of ' all for love ' ,

The world with calumny abounds ;  
The whitest virtue slander wounds.

Yet, the Shiva of our legend, who stands for Good, has been able to swallow all that poison and continue his great Dance of Life in India. Indeed, India may be looked upon as Tillai ( Chidambaram ), in whose golden hall ( *Sabha* ) the *Nadanta* dance of Nataraja is represented, which the Tamil *Koyil Puranam* regards as the Centre of the Universe. ( D. S. 56-66. ) But the Dance of Shiva is ' the cosmic dance ' of the entire Universe and it comprehends the triple rhythm of *srishti* ( creation ), *stithi* ( preservation ) and *samhara* ( destruction ). With Shiva is also associated, as *ardhangi*, Uma who is *Shakti* ( energy ) whose form, in this union, is *Ananda* ( bliss ). " Our Lord is the Dancer, who, like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses His power in mind and matter, and makes them dance in their turn. "

The power of imagination and thought which created ' legends, ' such as the above, is a special characteristic of the Indian mind. " In these days of specialisation," writes A. Coomaraswamy, " we are not accustomed to such a synthesis of thought ; but for those who ' saw ' such images as this, there could have been no division of life and thought into water-tight compartments. Nor do we always realise, when we criticise the merits of individual works, the full extent of the creative power which, to borrow a musical analogy, could discover a mode so expressive of fundamental rhythms and so profoundly significant and

inevitable. " ( *ib.* 65. ) Though this might appear somewhat too poetic or abstruse, to those who are not used to such fare, it is the stuff of which our mind is made, and India cannot be understood apart from it. However, this is not the main theme of OUR HERITAGE ; it is only its psychological background, its mental climate.

The most typical thing about a culture, Professor Rushbrook Williams has remarked, is the outlook on life to which it leads : for eventually it is our outlook on life which determines what we are, whether as individuals or as nations. In his reading, the typically Indian viewpoint considers, ' every created thing, mankind included, is in a perpetual process of dynamic change. Behind and beyond lie eternal Matter and eternal Spirit, from which everything in creation, from the great gods to the merest atoms, are temporary and always-evolving manifestations . . . , all equally necessary for the functioning of the universe.' ( W. I. 12-3. )

It is this sense of ' cosmic perspectives ' that has engendered in the mind of Indians — from the prince to the pauper — a feeling ( which is almost a conviction ) that we are always a part of some larger whole, whether it is the family, caste, village-community, country, or the wider universe. Apart from these wider wholes, we have no significance. This is the real function of " the stately structure of the Hindu social system " which has " stood forth as one of the most enduring organisms which humanity has ever devised. " ( *ib.* 26. ) A tree, after all, is to be judged by the fruits it has actually borne. India, therefore, must be judged like other nations by this objective test. OUR HERITAGE sets forth some of these fruits, trying to present them, not in a sapless dehydrated form, but



with at least a part of their original taste and flavour. How far this has been, as a matter of fact, accomplished is for the readers to assess. A few remarks on the substance of its eleven chapters may serve to indicate their scope and import by way of Introduction.

Ch. 1 deals with *Our Natural Inheritance* : recording the most basic of all human sentiments, expressed in our national anthems, whose lineage is traced to the earliest times, and describes the physical resources and features on which they rest : ‘Breathes there the man with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said : “This is my own, my Native-Land ?” ’ Ch. 2, on *The Confluence of Cultures*, treats of one of the most striking phenomena of history, viz., the remarkable extent to which racial assimilation has taken place in India, in spite of its vast size and natural diversities, and assesses the cultural synthesis which has been achieved, as between the Aryan and Dravidian on the one side, and the Hindu and Muslim on the other. Ch. 3 brings into focus the impression about the land and its peoples formed by foreigners, during successive centuries, which is done here, I believe, for the first time and with striking results. Following *In the Track of the Tourists*, one realises that Indians always impressed foreign visitors, coming from various countries of the world, by their physical as well as moral stature : “Exceeding the ordinary stature of mankind,” Pliny reported, “they looked upon a hundred years as but a moderate span of life.” Honesty or probity in business, hospitality towards foreigners, and remarkably cleanly habits of living, were appreciatively noted, in several parts of the country, and through all the centuries. Ch. 4, on *Truth-Beauty-Goodness*, concerns itself with the core of our culture, and shows how the triple ideal of *Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram* was translated

into the facts of life, and not merely cherished as a poetic dream. They were never separated, either one from the others, or their synthesis from habits of thinking feeling and living. Refinement of this type has rarely been witnessed elsewhere, permeating the entire society 'in widest commonalty spread'. Ch. 5 describes the *Pillars of Society*, and examines the institutions that have imparted strength and stability to our civilisation, and enabled it to endure intact through all the vicissitudes of history. It discusses the implications of *Dharma*, its application to the solution of sociological problems, and also points out the vital role of women in the history of our culture. Ch. 6 throws ample light on the *Prototypes of Democracy* in India, and gives interesting evidence of a very specific character on the scope, spirit and methods of their working. Ch. 7 dwells on the pursuit of *Artha* or economic activities—*At Home and Abroad*, and thereby it corrects the erroneous impressions formed about the Hindus, especially of their being 'unenterprising or stay-at-home, because of the inculcation of passivity by their religion and philosophy.' The romantic history of the building up of a Greater India, through our intercourse, commercial as well as cultural, with the external world, is therein unravelled. Ch. 8 deals with our *Monuments of Greatness* and their special Indian characteristics. It brings out the significance of Mohenjo-daro, no less than that of the civic organisation of Pataliputra ; it also comments upon the monumental greatness of our builders of 'New Orders', like Buddha, Asoka, Akbar and Shivaji. Ch. 9 explodes another myth about the 'other-worldliness' of Indian civilisation. It discloses convincing evidence of how the balance was very wisely maintained between *Physics and Metaphysics* : with the help of the one we tried to make



the best of this life ; and with the aid of the other to win immortality. It also shows how our eternal sense of perspectives enabled us to hold a very balanced view of life. Ch. 10 poses the important question : *Backward or Forward?* and explains the paradox of "understanding backwards but living forwards". It points out the forward trends in Renascent India, and stresses their positive activist optimism, as illustrated by its shining lights, particularly Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. It ends with reflections arising out of the latter's visit to Russia and his reactions to it. Finally, Ch. 11, entitled *Towards Fulfilment*, carries these reflections further into the arena of contemporary problems of national and world reconstruction. These are better read in extenso in their place, than squeezed into a sentence or two here.

Meanwhile, we shall conclude this Introduction with the echoes of the Voice of INDIA as transmitted by two of its truest exponents : Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi who sum up between themselves the best that was in ancient India and the best that is in the modern. The former has written in his *The Discovery of India* : "India moves forward with confidence, rooted in herself and yet eager to learn from others, and co-operate with them.....True culture derives its inspiration from every corner of the world, but it is home-grown and has to be based on the wide mass of the people.....Their culture must be a continuation of past trends, and must also represent their new urges and creative tendencies. A real internationalism is not something in the air without roots or anchorage. It has to grow out of national cultures (and) can only flourish today on a basis of freedom and equality...We are citizens of no mean country, and we are proud of the land

of our birth, of our people, our culture and our traditions. That pride should not be for a romanticized past to which we want to cling; nor should it encourage exclusiveness or a want of appreciation of other ways than ours. We shall therefore seek wisdom and knowledge and friendship and comradeship wherever we can find them, and co-operate with others in common tasks; but we are no suppliants for others' favours and patronage. Thus we shall remain true Indians and Asians, and become, at the same time, good internationalists and world citizens." ( pp. 688-9 )

"I shall work for an India," Gandhiji has said, "in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high-class and low-class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony...There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability, or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men...This is the India of my dreams...Indian culture is neither Hindu, nor Islamic, nor any other wholly. It is a fusion of all...I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet."

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## CHAPTER I

# OUR NATURAL INHERITANCE

*'Thus do the gods sing the glories of Bharata Bhumi: More fortunate than we are they who are born in that land wherein lies the veritable road to Heaven and Salvation.'*

VISHNU PURANA

**L**OSING touch with our past, we have also lost our capacity to appreciate the richness of our inheritance. The recovery of these riches will be the surest foundation of our future greatness. A tree can have its natural growth only from its own roots, drawing nourishment from its own soil. The sap of its body and the surrounding climate and conditions are the gifts of nature that determine how high the plant shall grow, how wide its branches shall spread, how green and abundant shall be its foliage and shade, and how sweet and enduring shall be its flowers and fruits.

The tree of our national existence has its roots deep in the past ; its body is stout and branching-out like the Indian banyan's ; its fruits have also been far-flung by the breath of heaven.

Yes. But 'Indian' is not an *Indian* word ; it is anglicized from Greek. Our ancestors called our country *Jambu Dvipa*, *Bharata Varsha* or *Bharata Bhumi*. What we today call Hindusthan was then known as *Aryavarta* or *Uttarapatha*, as distinguished from *Dakshinapatha* or the Deccan and South India. In common speech, however, by Hindusthan we now understand the entire country. We include in it not only Hindus but all others : Muslims, Christians, Parsis,

and so on. Indeed, it is interesting and important to note that one of the most popular and inspiring of our national anthems was composed by the great Muslim poet Mohammad Iqbal :

*Sāre' jahān se' achhā Hindostān hamārā.  
Mazab nahin sikhātā āpas men bair rakhnā,  
Hindi hain ham, vatan hai Hindostān hamārā.*

“ Better than all the world is our Hindusthan.  
Religion does not teach that we should hate one  
another.

We are Hindis, Hindusthan is our Motherland.”

Another song which is on the lips of every Indian is *Vandē Mataram*, composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterji. In inspiring words it invokes the Motherland :

Thou who savest, arise and awake !  
Thou art wisdom, thou art law,  
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,  
Thou the love divine, the hope  
In our hearts that conquers death,  
Thine the strength that nerves the arm,  
Thine the beauty, thine the charm,  
Every image made divine  
In our temples is but thine...  
Loveliest of all earthly lands,  
Showering wealth from well-stored hands.

Equally inspiring is Rabindranath Tagore's *Janagana mana adhinayaka*—*Jaya hē, jaya hē, jaya hē*:

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people,  
Thou Dispenser of India's Destiny.  
Thy name rouses the hearts of the Punjab, Sind, Gujarat,  
and Maratha, of Dravida, Orissa and Bengal.  
It echoes in the hills of the Vindhya and Himalayas,  
mingles in the music of the Jumna and the Ganges,  
and is chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea.  
They pray for thy benediction and sing thy praise :  
Thou Dispenser of India's Destiny.  
Victory, victory, victory to thee !

Day and night thy voice goes out from land to land,  
 calling Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains,  
 round thy throne,  
 and Parsees, Muslims, and Christians.

Offerings are brought to thy shrine by the East and  
 the West,  
 to be woven in a garland of love.

Thou bringest the hearts of all peoples  
 into the harmony of One Life,  
 Thou Dispenser of India's Destiny.  
 Victory, victory, victory to Thee !

Poets are but the inspired agents of the dumb millions. They express in enduring speech what we all feel, think and dream. Like the radio receiver, they are sensitive to unseen forces, and melodies otherwise unheard. A closer acquaintance with our ancient literature will reveal how our national anthems have an ancestry going back to the earliest times of which we have any written record. The *Atharva-veda*, for instance, sings the praises of the Mother-country as 'the land of the brave and the pious, of heroism and enterprise, of trade and commerce, of art and science, of greatness and virtue, of countless herbs and plants ; the land girt by the ocean, and fertilized by rivers like the Indus, and rich in grains and food-stuffs ; the land where our forefathers lived and worked, where the *Asuras* succumbed to the *Devas* ; the land which boasts of the highest mountain and the most beautiful forests ; the land of sacrificial rites and sacred pleasures, of valour and renown, patriotism and self-sacrifice, of virtue and kindness.' (F. U. 33-4)

Manu too speaks of *Brahmavarta* as ' the country specially created by God' (ii. 17) ; and the *Amara-kosha* describes *Aryavarta* as ' the sacred land' : *Aryavartah punya bhumiḥ madhyam Vindhya Himalayoh.*

That such patriotic sentiments were widespread in all parts of the country is borne out by numerous references in our literature and inscriptions. Well might we be proud of our inheritance, because few countries of the world are so richly endowed as is India. 'It is a remarkably fine country,' wrote Babur in the first quarter of the 16th century A. D. ; 'it is quite a different world compared with our countries. Its hills and rivers, its forests and plains, its animals and plants, its inhabitants and their languages, its winds and rains, are all of a different nature. You have no sooner passed the river Sind ( Indus ) than the country, the trees, the stones, the wandering tribes, the manners and customs of the people are entirely those of Hindustan.' (M. E. I. 9-10)

Our land with its lovely name of *Jambu Dvipa* is so vast, so varied, so rich in its natural resources, and so well marked out by the Himalayas and the seas, that it ought to breed in us the sentiments which make for national unity and independence. India is like a well-appointed home, and we are the family inhabiting it. An authority on geography has stated : 'There is no part of the world better marked out by nature, as a region by itself, as India is—exclusive of Burma. It is a region indeed full of contrasts in physical features and climate—but the features that divide it, as a whole from the surrounding regions, are too clear to be overlooked.' The *Vishnu Purana* says : 'The country that lies north of the ocean and south of the snow-clad mountain is called *Bharatam* where dwell the descendants of Bharata.'

This country is twenty times the size of Great Britain, and quite as large as the continent of Europe west of Russia. Extending over 1800 by 1360 miles, from Long. 61° to 96°E and Lat. 8° to 37° N., its 1,575,000 square miles of territory comprise every variety of climate, soil,

minerals, flora and fauna; while its altitudes range between sea-level and 29,141 ft. (the height of Mt. Everest according to the latest measurements) above it.

As early as the 4th century B. C. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya, observed: 'And while the soil of India bears on its surface all kinds of fruits which are known to cultivation, it has, underground, numerous veins of all sorts of metals; for it contains much gold and silver, and copper and iron in no small quantity, and even in tin and other metals which are employed in making articles of use and ornament, as well as the implements and accoutrements of war.' (Mc. 30) A modern geologist has remarked: 'Were India wholly isolated from the rest of the world, or her mineral productions protected from competition, there cannot be the least doubt that she would be able, from within her own boundaries, to supply very nearly all the requirements in so far as the mineral world is concerned, of a highly civilised community.' (W. I. 20)

On the richness and variety of our flora and fauna, it is not necessary to dwell at length. They are more varied than those of any other country of equal area in the eastern hemisphere, if not on the globe. This is partly due to climatic conditions, and partly to immigrations from the surrounding regions. Of flowering plants alone, there are said to be 17,000 species under 174 natural orders. Our variety of animal species also far surpasses that of Europe. The contribution of our forests to the wealth of India may be computed from the fact that we have nearly 30,000 sq. miles of jungle area. If these resources are properly conserved and scientifically exploited, we shall be one of the best equipped countries of the modern world.



The *Imperial Gazetteer of India* points out that our material wealth largely depends on the storage of our water-supply which carries fertility to our plains. The strength of India depends on the nature of the bulwarks which afford us this water-supply, and also provide for our frontier defence. The future of India, it says, depends on the manner in which we maintain these bulwarks guarding the gateways and portals of the country, preventing the landward irruptions which have so often, in the past, changed the course of our history and given a new ethnic strain to our population. The picturesqueness of the Khyber Pass—one of these gateways—is thus described by one observer :

There is a turn in the Khyber Pass, as it winds from Ali Masjid to Jamrud, where all at once you see the mountain wall drop away to its foundation, and look out over a tawny plain, stretching illimitably into a far off purple haze.....No spot on earth is more saturated with the romance of history : for that plain is INDIA ; and from here or hereabouts has it been surveyed by the swarms of on-coming Aryans, by Alexander and his Greeks, by Scythian, Tartar and Afghan hordes, by Timur, by Babur, by Nadir Shah and other conquerors without number.....Is there any other region in the world ( he rightly asks ) which makes such a multiform appeal to the vision, the imagination and the intellect ?

There are, in fact, innumerable spots like this in India, but we have no space to dilate on them here. They constitute a form of natural wealth which, if properly exploited, would attract more sight-seeing tourists to India than most other countries. For illustration, we have only to think of world-famous Kashmir, Darjeeling and the Nilgiris. E. Kawaguchi, a Japanese Buddhist abbot, was so captivated by the



grandeur of the Himalayas near Mana-sarovar and Mt. Kailas, that he described it as 'unique and sublime.' Mt. Kailas, he says, 'towers so majestically above the peaks around, that I fancied I saw the image of our Mighty Lord Buddha, calmly addressing his five-hundred disciples: Verily, verily, it was a natural Mandala!'

Though public interest for the moment is concentrated on the scientific exploration of the Himalayas, E. B. Havell has observed: 'The Himalayas offer equal opportunities for artistic research: they have always been the pivot of Indian religious art...The Indian order of architecture, the design of Indian temples, and the symbolism of the principal figures in Indian iconography, are all focussed in the Himalayas.' Take only a cursory survey of Indian literature, he further says, and you will find that all Indian poetry and mythology, point to the Himalayas as the centre of the world, and as the throne of the great gods. According to the *Vishnu Purana*, Brahma has his throne in this region, shaped like the seed-vessel of a lotus. Even in the farthest corners of South India, the Hindu regards the Himalayas, not from the point of view of the mountaineering sportsman, or that of the scientific explorer, but as the Muslim thinks of Mecca and the Christian of Jerusalem. ( H. I. A. v, 4, 6 )

A like sentiment is also evoked by the Ganges and other rivers of India in the hearts of most Indians. 'No river on the surface of the globe,' writes T. H. Goldich, 'can compare with the Ganges in sanctity. From her source to her outflow in the Bay of Bengal, every yard of the river is sacred (i.e. so regarded by the pious Hindu). To bathe in the Ganges at stated festivals is to wash away sin; to die

and be cremated on the river bank is to attain eternal peace. Tracing magnificent curves through the flat lowlands, the four rivers—Ganga, Jumna, Gogra and Gandaki—have for centuries combined to form an over-ruling factor in the development of Indian races.' Below the Rajmahal hills, the flood-discharge amounts to a million and a half cubic feet per second. Nearly every vegetable product which feeds and clothes a people, or enables them to trade with foreign countries, is to be found in its basin. Upon its banks, in the present day, are such centres of wealth as Calcutta, Patna, Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore—with Agra and Delhi on its affluent Jumna. 'There is not a river in the world which has influenced humanity or contributed to the growth of material civilization or of social ethics, to such an extent as the Ganges. The wealth of India has been concentrated in her valley; and beneath the shade of trees, whose roots have been nourished on her waters, the profoundest doctrines of moral philosophy have been conceived, to be promulgated afar for the guidance of the world.' ( I. G. I. i. 22-26 )

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NAVAT SAKSHI JYU 2 MADUR

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONFLUENCE OF CULTURES

*' Whatever the reason, it is a fact that India's special gift to mankind has been the ability and willingness of Indians to effect a synthesis of many different elements, both of thoughts and of peoples : to create in fact Unity out of diversity.'*

—C. E. M. JOAD

INDIA is often described as a vast Ethnological Museum because of the diversity of her population. But we are as a nation less heterogeneous, racially and culturally speaking, than several others whose compositeness is not even noticed because of the great political overcoat they are wearing. The European continent west of Russia, which is no larger than India, has a more bewildering heterogeneity than might possibly be ascribed to us. Russia, with a total population which is only about two-fifths of our own, is more truly a cultural and ethnological museum than any other country in the world, with the possible exception of America. It is also not to be forgotten that the population of India is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times that of North and South America put together. The following description of the U. S. S. R. will speak for itself :

The Soviet Union is not composed of a racially homogeneous people, but consists of a medley of diverse races, nationalities, and national groups, speaking different languages, belonging to various sects and religions, and existing at markedly different stages of development. The total number of these divisions is about 60 in a population of 170 millions. But, if smaller groups with

populations of a few thousand souls were also to be taken into account, then their number would go up to about 200.

If Russia today comprises a unity, by the same standard, we too constitute a unity; besides, in a cultural sense, we are more homogeneous and better integrated. An Indian stands, like the nationals of any other country, more differentiated from foreigners than from any of his own countrymen, of whatever creed or province. He has, besides, a culture (by which we mean a way of living and a way of looking at things) which is distinctively *Indian*. The most distinctive characteristic of this culture is its spirit of synthesis.

Mr. A. Yusuf Ali has observed: 'There are two sacred streams in India—the Jumna and the Ganges—which have a strange appearance, just below their junction at Allahabad. The colour of the water in the two streams remains distinct for many hundred yards after the streams have mingled together...Yet very soon, the broad and majestic waters of the united river flow down the thousand miles or so of the course which still remains, before they join the salt sea. May we use this as a simile for the two streams of human culture—the Eastern and the Western?' We not only agree, but also include in the streams that flow together the Semitic, the Mongolian, the Aryan and the Dravidian, as well as the pre-Dravidian in India. To carry this figure of speech into the region of—'believe it or not'—Science: the water of the mingled rivers has been found to have 'bactricidal' properties which appear to be inexplicable to the scientists! (S. I. C. 114-15) If we convert this simile into a metaphor, we might say that 'the confluent streams of our culture are saturated with salts which possess peculiarly preservative

and prophylactic properties.' In plainer language, we have a national culture in India which is a synthesis of the healthiest elements contributed by the several races which have come to stay in this land in the course of its long history. It will be untrue to deny the existence of some unhealthy, or even poisonous, elements still persisting in our body politic ; but this only means that we are not perfect. Like the rest of the human world outside India, we too are striving after that Horizon whose perpetual lure is one of the strongest incentives to progress.

It is well to remember that ' the broad and majestic waters of the united river ' are still on their way to 'the salt sea.' The commingling is, therefore, not yet complete. Setting aside all the minor tributaries, we shall here follow only the Jumna of the pre-Aryan stream of culture, joining with the Ganges of the main Aryan stream, until they meet with the Brahmaputra of Islamic culture which appears at first to come from an opposite direction but flows together in the fertile delta...The final goal of all rivers is of course the sea ; but the sea itself is a part of the ocean which brings the whole of humanity together. We shall meet with the sea-borne culture of Europe and the West at the estuary of our confluence, and then meditate on the grand prospect of a universal communion.

It is hazardous to be categorical in the attribution of cultural elements to particular sources. But it is broadly true that Indian culture, as we find it today, is the product of the intermingling of the Aryan and the non-Aryan ( i. e. Dravidian and pre-Dravidian, primitive or aboriginal ), on the one hand, and the Muslim ( Arabic-Turkish-Persian ) on the other. There are, no

doubt, Mongolian elements in the north-eastern and Himalayan regions, but these are seen more in the physical features of the people than in their way of life. We have also other minorities, like the Parsis, the Christians, and even a few Jews; but culturally they have been largely assimilated with the major communities with whom they have been long associated. They still retain their own religious beliefs and practices: for instance, the fire-worship of the Parsis and their peculiar disposal of the dead. Yet, socially, they have many things in common with the Gujaratis: e. g. their speech, women's sarees and the custom of wearing *kumkum* on ceremonial occasions. The Jews worship in their own synagogues, but are socially indistinguishable from the Indian Christians for whom they are often mistaken. Likewise, the Christians go to their churches, read the Bible, and use the cross-symbol; but in many parts of India, being converts, they retain their original Hindu names, speak the local vernacular, wear the same dress as the others, and mostly eat the same food, except where they occasionally take also pork. Recently, they too have come so much under the spell of *swadeshi* that they have changed their foreign priests and appointed Indians in their place. There is also a movement among them for the adoption of Indian motifs in religious symbolism, nomenclature — e. g. the Christa Prema Seva Sangha—and so on.

Turning to the main confluents: Hinduism in every part of India displays the synthesis of the Aryan and the Dravidian. In its pantheon are Aryan gods and Dravidian goddesses. In its Trinity of Brahma-Vishnu-Maheshvara, the first has all but vanished from the popular worship, and parity of allegiance has been established between the Aryan Vishnu and the non-

Aryan Shiva. Synthetic deities like Hari-Hara and Dattatreya also have been created : the former seeking to establish the union of Vishnu and Shiva, and the latter including Brahma in the realization of that unity. The Aryans are supposed to have borrowed image-worship from the Dravidians. The *lingam*, or phallus, is considered definitely pre-Aryan ; so is Shakti a form of the Mother Goddess. The Dravidians also worship animals such as Murugan, Naga or serpents, and trees. We find, today, Hindus—mostly in the south, where Dravidians predominate—observing *Naga-panchami*, setting up idols of Ganapati ( the elephant god ) and Nrisimha ( the lion-man god ), and women worshipping the sacred banyan on *Vata-paurṇima* day. The spirit of synthesis has been carried to such lengths, that we have combinations, not only of man and beast, as in the above illustrations, but also of the sexes, as in the Ardha-narishvara ( one-half Shiva and the other half Parvati ) represented in one single image. Fanatical purists might laugh at this ‘monstrosity’ of Indian religious symbolism, but it truly represents the earnestness of the Hindu mind in trying to realize the supreme teaching of the *Veda*: *Unity in the midst of diversity*.

In society, this synthesis is seen in the adoption of the Aryan speech, Sanskrit, as the language of religion by the Dravidian. It was not the super-imposition of the conqueror’s language on the conquered ; because the Dravidians were never subjugated to that extent. Having witnessed the nature of the exchange between the two, in the matter of religious practices, the adoption of the sacred-thread by the Dravidian may not be construed as a badge of slavery. Dravidian languages are also strongly impregnated with Sanskrit.



But South Indian temples, which house some of the Aryan gods and carry on the Aryan ritual for the most part, are a marvel of the Dravidian genius for architecture as well as iconography. It is interesting to watch therein Dravidian priests chanting Vedic *mantras*, on the one side, and, on the other, to listen to Dravidian music, and to witness the exquisite South Indian *kathakali* dances in the temple-squares, as act-oblations.

Though, originally, the rigid caste-system was not native to the free Aryan immigrants, the insidious *Varna* distinction arose, as is generally accepted, out of the difference in *colour* between the Aryan and the Dasyu, as the invader called the native. The differences went deeper than merely the colour of the skin. The Aryans worshipped the bright gods of heaven above, while the Dasyus stooped to the grovelling godlings of the earth for adoration; nay, they looked down upon the latter as worshippers of the *ṣiṣṇa-devah*, or symbols of sex. Between the Aryans of noble birth, as they regarded themselves, speaking the refined language of the gods, Sanskrit (*girvana bhasha*), and eating cooked food, and the *krishna* (dark) worshippers of the phallus, who ate uncooked food, spoke a vulgar tongue, and were *avvata* and *ayajvana* — irreligious and non-sacrificing—there could be no union. Yet, time and the disparity in numbers, and even the contacts brought about by their very conflicts, made for an ultimate drawing together, resulting in alliances, such as those indicated by the co-operation of the Kishkindha tribes — symbolized in Hanuman (adopted into the Aryan family by being described as *Vayu-suta*, or *Maruti*, the son of the Vedic god Marut)—with Sri Ramachandra during his war against Ravana and the conquest of Lanka. Agastya, an Aryan sage, lives in South Indian



tradition as a civilizer of the Dravidians, teaching them grammar, etc. ( His image is found in Indonesia, carried there by the early Dravidian colonizers of that region. ) Krishna, 'the dark one'—presumably of Dravidian origin—becomes identified with the Aryan Vishnu and dominates the Hindu mind as the most popular *avatar* of God. He is the fountain of inspiration, both for the *Bhagavata Dharma* or the popular Bhakti cult, and the *Karmayoga-shastra* of the *Gita*. In fact, there is hardly any cult or sect in India which does not quote from the *Gita* in support of its own particular doctrine.

What socially helped the *rapprochement* between Aryan and Dravidian was the elastic principle of *Apad-dharma* regarding the application or observance of the two safeguards which the Aryan law-givers had invented for the protection of their racial purity, viz. food and marriage restrictions. The first was easier to relax than the second, and we find Manu stating : 'He who is in danger of losing his life may accept food from any person whatsoever ; he will be no more tainted with sin than the sky with mud.' ( x. 104 ff. ) The law regarding marriage, too, 'came in for revision in course of time, and, in its restatement, provision was made for various types, such as *Gandharva*, *Paishachi*, *Anuloma*, *Pratiloma*, etc., indicating that mixed marriages had become so frequent that they had to be regularized. Evidence of such relations is found scattered through the epic and *pauranic* literature. Thus, Vyasa himself is said to have been the son of Parashara and a fisherwoman ; Bhima married Hidimba—a *rakshasi*—stipulating that she should behave like an 'Arya' ; Arjuna, similarly, married Ulupi, a Naga princess. In the *Ramayana*, Ravana is described as the son of Vishravas

by the *rakshasi* Kaikasi ( *Uttara-kanda* ). Mr S. V. Vishwanath observes in his *Racial Synthesis in Hindu Culture* : ‘ It may be that some of these stories of marriages contain miraculous and mythical elements, but these could have found currency in India only at a time when the union of an Arya with a non-Aryan woman was not altogether foreign to the Aryan sentiment. ’ ( pp. 91-92 )

With the rise of popular and reformist movements, like Buddhism and Jainism, this process of assimilation and synthesis was carried further and deeper. These developments served to undermine the rigidity of the caste restrictions. Besides, they were proselytizing movements and deliberately admitted into their fold even people from the lowest strata of society, even as the foreign missionaries do today. I have fully commented upon this aspect, with reference to Jainism, in my *Jainism and Karnatak Culture* ( pp. 142-68 ). Jainism, an Aryan cult of North Indian origin, underwent very interesting transformations under its Dravidian and South Indian *milieu*. Buddhism, as is better known, absorbed fresh immigrants into the country like the Sakas, Kushans and Yavanas ( of whom Kanishka and Menander are prominent examples ); and the resulting *Mahayana*—which was also due to the influence of orthodox Hinduism—revealed the power of synthesis bringing into existence a better integrated society. ‘ The newer form of Buddhism,’ writes V. A. Smith, ‘ had much in common with the older form of Hinduism, and the relation is so close that even an expert often feels the difficulty in deciding to which system a particular image should be assigned. ’ ( E. H. I. 302 )

Of more absorbing and vital interest is the history of the Islamic impact on India. The antithesis implied in the present separatist movement among a section of Muslim politicians, might appear to lend support to the 'two nations theory'. But deeper knowledge of the relations between the two great communities, both as they exist today in their social practices and culture and as they obtained during the long course of our common history, points to a very different conclusion. The very fact that some of the Muslims demand an equal share of political power and press for their claim to absolute mastery over important portions of the national territory, is irrefutable evidence of their being flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, in an historical and ethnic sense. Two brothers fighting for the division of their inherited property, by their very claims, establish the truth of their consanguinity. Kurukshetra did not establish that the Kauravas and Pandavas were 'natural enemies born to perpetual strife'; it only proved the unwisdom and suicidal consequences of the psychology of separatism. A glance at our history and contemporary society will prove very illuminating.

In the first place, as Pt Jawaharlal Nehru has very correctly pointed out in his book already referred to, it is misleading to speak of a 'Muslim Period' in Indian history; this is no more correct than would be the description of the modern period as the 'Christian Period'. ( p. 279 ) The more appropriate term corresponding to 'British Rule' is 'Turkish Rule'; this is not a religious, but an ethnic term. Historically, too, it is more correct; for, with the exception of the earliest Arab conquerors of Sind, and the Afghan dynasties of the Lodis and the Surs, both of whom were very short-lived, the vast majority of the Sultans of Delhi, as well

as the provincial Sultans, were of Turki origin. Even the Mughals were really Turks, called by another name. For Babur was a lineal descendant of Timur the Turk, though his mother was from the family of Chinghiz Khan who was a Mongol. So was Nadir Shah a Turk, though he rose to be leader and dictator in Persia (much as the Corsican Napoleon Bonaparte did in France ).

Secondly, it is equally important to remember that these invaders came to India, not for the sake of waging *Jihad* aiming at either the wholesale conversion of the 'infidels' or their total destruction. The earliest Muslims to come to India were Arab traders. Along with them also came a few missionaries. But the methods of both were equally peaceful, and, as we shall notice in the next chapter, they were cordially treated by Indian rulers like the Rashtrakuta Amoghavarsha. The first Arab invasion, which is treated by historians as an isolated episode, had no religious motive behind it; it was provoked by the hostile activities of a few pirates off the coast of Sind. The failure of the ruler of Sind to own responsibility for the outrage, drew upon him punitive action. But under the conditions of the times, a permanent foothold was acquired by the invaders, as a matter of course. Had the aim been the establishment of *Dar-ul Islam* in India, it might have been followed up by either wholesale conversion or destruction of the Hindus, and the extension of that conquest. But neither of these things happened immediately.

The next invasion, or series of expeditions, did not come about until nearly two centuries later, and, then also from an altogether different direction, and for equally non-religious objectives. Mahmud of Ghazni came as a plunderer, not as a crusader: *greed* rather than *creed* was the motive force behind his seventeen expedi-

tions. He destroyed temples primarily because they were the repositories of the wealth of the land, using religion only as a convenient slogan. He enrolled unconverted Hindus in his army, and carried away our craftsmen and architects — the builders of the very temples he destroyed in India — for the construction of his mosques and palaces in Ghazni. The Hindu barber Tilak rose to a high position, without being obliged to change his religion, and loyally served his Muslim masters in putting down the revolt of a powerful Muslim governor like Niyaltigin. We find this model copied in later times, under the Mughals, in the employment of not only a Man Singh under the liberal Akbar, but also a Jai Singh under the illiberal Aurangzeb. Instances may be very easily multiplied, but those cited already should suffice for our present purpose. In the entire history of the Sultans in India, running over a thousand years, there is not a single war waged for the sake of religion as such ; their primary motive was always political. Even when we come to the wars of Vijayanagara and of the Marathas, there is no essential change. The enrolment of Hindus by the Muslims, and of Muslims by the Hindu rulers, in important offices, is sufficient evidence of the non-religious character of their struggles. Alliances between States and parties were frequently formed, in wars fought against co-religionists, no importance being attached to the religious faith of the allies. To cite only two famous instances — both when Nadir Shah invaded, and when the Durrani Ahmed Shah attacked, the Muslim Mughal Emperor called upon his Hindu Maratha allies to meet the common danger. This was also in keeping with the older tradition of a Hasan Khan Mewati fighting on the side of Rana Sangram Singh

against Babur, for the defence of Hindusthan. How came this to happen ?

It happened partly because, in those times, loyalties were personal and based on self-interest, and partly because no one ever dreamt of a 'two nations' theory. Because of the sheer paucity in numbers of those who cared to settle down in this country permanently, and also owing to a sense of realism — which showed the absence of uncompromising fanaticism — a *modus vivendi* was found by the Muslim settlers in India : they simply could not carry on without the co-operation of the Hindus. The latter, too, by force of circumstances, realized the imperious necessity of the situation, and accepted the Turushkas as a part of the divine dispensation. Bigotry and forcible conversions did appear occasionally, but they were not the rule. Often they were concomitants of war ; as features of a normal policy they were rare. If this were not so, the whole of India should have been long since an entirely Muslim land like Persia and Afghanistan. Akbar had his prototypes in Zain-ul Abidin of Kashmir and Husain Shah of Bengal ; there were tolerant rulers all over the country. But 'the good that men do is oft interred with their bones : the evil lives long after them.' Historians are, partly at least, responsible for this. They have largely drawn upon the court-chroniclers who were mostly 'war correspondents' ; very often they were less liberal than their tolerant rulers and imparted a flavour of fanaticism to their own compositions. To base our picture of the times solely, or mostly, upon their lurid descriptions of abnormal happenings, will be as correct as writing a history of our modern age only from detailed accounts of the wars punctuating its normal course. It is more refreshing to turn from these



hectic histories to the simple annals of the common people.

‘ Seldom in the history of mankind, ’ writes Sir John Marshall, ‘ has the spectacle been witnessed of two civilizations, so vast and so strongly developed, yet so radically dissimilar, as the Muhammadan and the Hindu, meeting and mingling together. The very contrasts which existed between them, the wide divergence of their culture and religion, make the history of their impact peculiarly instructive. ’ The implied ‘ contrasts ’ existed more at the commencement of their contacts, than later on. Sir John’s own study of the Monuments of Medieval India revealed to him everywhere ‘ precisely the same fusion of Hindu and Muslim ideals, the same happy blend of elegance and strength, [ which ] is eloquent testimony to the enduring vitality of Hindu art under an alien rule, and to the wonderful capacity of the Muslim for absorbing that art into his own and endowing it with a new and grander spirit. ’ ( C. H. I. iii. 568-640 )

Surely, the character of a culture or civilization is better reflected in its arts, literature, religious practices and philosophy, than in its political junk. As Dr Tara Chand has observed with great truth : ‘ Not only did Hindu religion, Hindu art, Hindu literature, and Hindu science, absorb Muslim elements, but the very spirit of Hindu culture and the very stuff of the Hindu mind, were also altered, and the Muslim reciprocated by responding to the change in every department of life. ’ ( I. C. 137 ) ‘ But when all is said ’, writes Rev M. T. Titus in his *Indian Islam*, ‘ there seems to be little doubt that Hinduism has wrought a far greater change in Islam, than Islam has wrought in Hinduism, which still continues to pursue the even tenor of its way, with

a complacency and confidence that are amazing.' Whichever way the balance might have tilted, there is no gainsaying the fact of their mutual interactions resulting in a more harmonious synthesis. 'Of the eighty odd million Muslims,' according to Mr Abdul Quadir, 'who today form a quarter of the population, the great majority are descended from Hindu stock and retain certain characteristics common to Indians as a whole.' (L. I. 287 ) Another Muslim writer, Mr Abdul Aziz, points out that 'the Mughal nobility constituted a sort of agency through which the ideals of art and morals and manners, were diffused among the lower classes...The habits and customs of the people, their ideas, tendencies and ambitions, their tastes and pleasures, were often unconsciously fashioned on this model. The peerage acted as the conduit-pipe for this stream of influence. The patronage of art and culture followed the same lines ; even when the interest was not genuine, the enlightened pursuits were followed and encouraged, as a dogma, dictated by fashion.' (ib. 297)

This is a vast and alluring theme, but we have to be content with only a few reflections and examples for want of space. Mughal art and architecture were a joint product of the Muslim and Hindu genius and also reflected the human personality of the rulers. As Tagore has observed, 'Mughal emperors were men, they were not mere administrators. They lived and died in India, they loved and fought. The memorials of their reign do not persist in the ruins of factories and offices, but in immortal works of art—not only in great buildings, but in pictures and music, and workmanship in stone and metal, in cotton and wool-fabrics. But the British Government in India is not personal. It



is official and therefore an abstraction. It has nothing to express in the true language of art. For law, efficiency, and exploitation cannot sing themselves into epic stones.' ( P. 18 )

In literature, the evolution of Urdu is living proof of the daily intercourse between the Hindus and Muslims in the ordinary business of life. It became very early the spoken language of the rulers as well as the ruled. Like their art, it was the joint product of the genius of two peoples. 'For some time the soldiers continued to talk Persian among themselves and the local vernacular with the inhabitants of the country; but, ultimately, Persian died out... As the soldiers and the people intermixed and intermarried, the language spread over the city into the suburbs and even into the surrounding district.' It was like what happened with the Norman French in the development of the English language. (U. L. 6-10)

Finally, religion is the real element in which the people live and breathe. This it is that is supposed, by superficial observers, to be the barrier which divides the Hindu from the Muslim, like oil from water. But closer acquaintance will again show that the cracks are only in the surface-soil and do not penetrate deeper. It is politics that divides, or, rather politicians, not religion : 'peers' might quarrel, but 'pirs' unite. 'Owing to the ancient *guru-chela* practice,' says Titus, 'existing among the Hindus, which was the heritage of the majority of the Muslims of India, through their Hindu origin, it became all the more easy for saint-worship to become a fixed part of Muslim religious life. In fact, the Muslim masses of India seem to enter into the worship of saints with more enthusiasm than into the regular religious exercises which are obligatory. And in

spite of all the influence of modern education and various reform movements, it is doubtful if there is really less saint-worship today than there was formerly.' ( I. I. 131-46 ) Interesting evidence of how this saint-worship, throughout our history, brought the masses — both Hindu and Muslim — together, is to be found in all the provinces of India. It is well known that the Hindu Chaitanya had Muslim disciples who changed their names to Rup, Sanatan and Haridas. There were Hindu-Muslim saints, or those who originally belonged to one community but became saints after their conversion to the other, or Hindus who had Muslim *gurus* and *vice versa*. For examples we should refer the reader to the work of Titus, already cited, and to others like *The Cultural Heritage of India* ( I I. 248-66 ) and Dr Tara Chand's *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*.

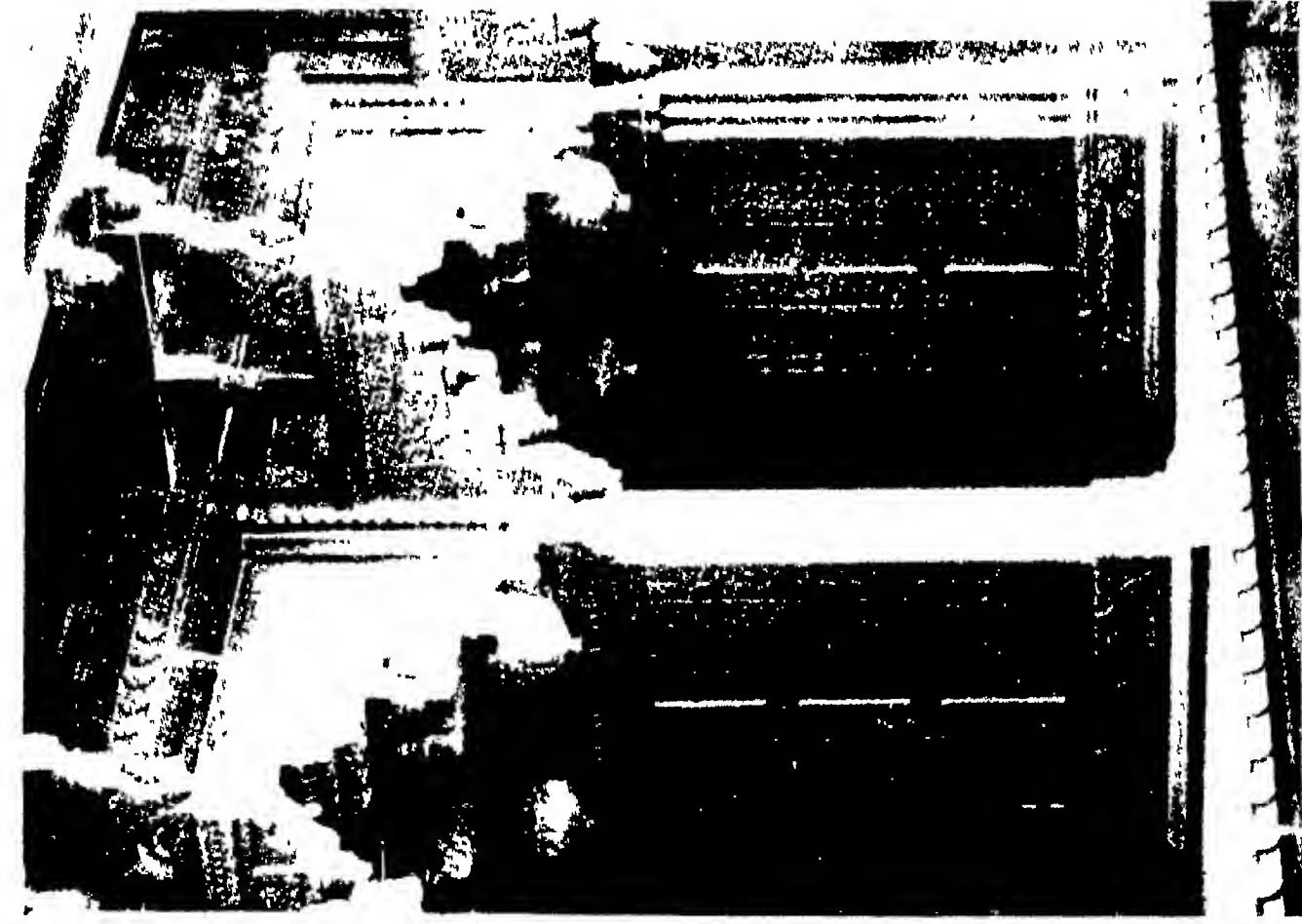
A social survey among the masses will also reveal strands like the Malkana Rajputs who visit temples as well as mosques, practise circumcision, yet greet one another with 'Ram Ram'. Some of the Memons of Gujarat also use the same greeting, worship the Hindu Trinity of Brahma-Vishnu-Maheshvar, and regard the founder of their own sect — Imam Shah — as an incarnation of Brahma ! The followers of Sheikh Muhammad, in Maharashtra, observe *Ekadashi* as well as *Ramzan*, and make pilgrimages to Pandharpur and Mecca alike. The Turk-Nawas ( New Turks ? ) of East Bengal worship Laxmi-devi, while the Mirasis of Amritsar carry offerings to Durga Bhavani ; and the Muslims of East Punjab propitiate the goddess Sitala for protection from small-pox and other epidemics. The Churihars, of the United Provinces, perform the *shraddhas* of their dead ancestors. Several Hindus participate actively in the celebration of *Mohurram*

festivities, and Muslims similarly associate themselves with the *Holi* and *Divali* celebrations. Until recently, the public immersion of the Ganapati idols in the sea at Chaupatti ( in Bombay ) used to be attended with the music of professional Muslim band-players. In the face of all this, to speak of the differences between Hindus and Muslims as ' ineradicable ' is, to put it very mildly, to betray one's ignorance of the realities. Once Mr M. A. Jinnah, under the spell of political rhetoric, delivered himself of the following dictum, at a press interview in Bombay on 2nd July 1942 :

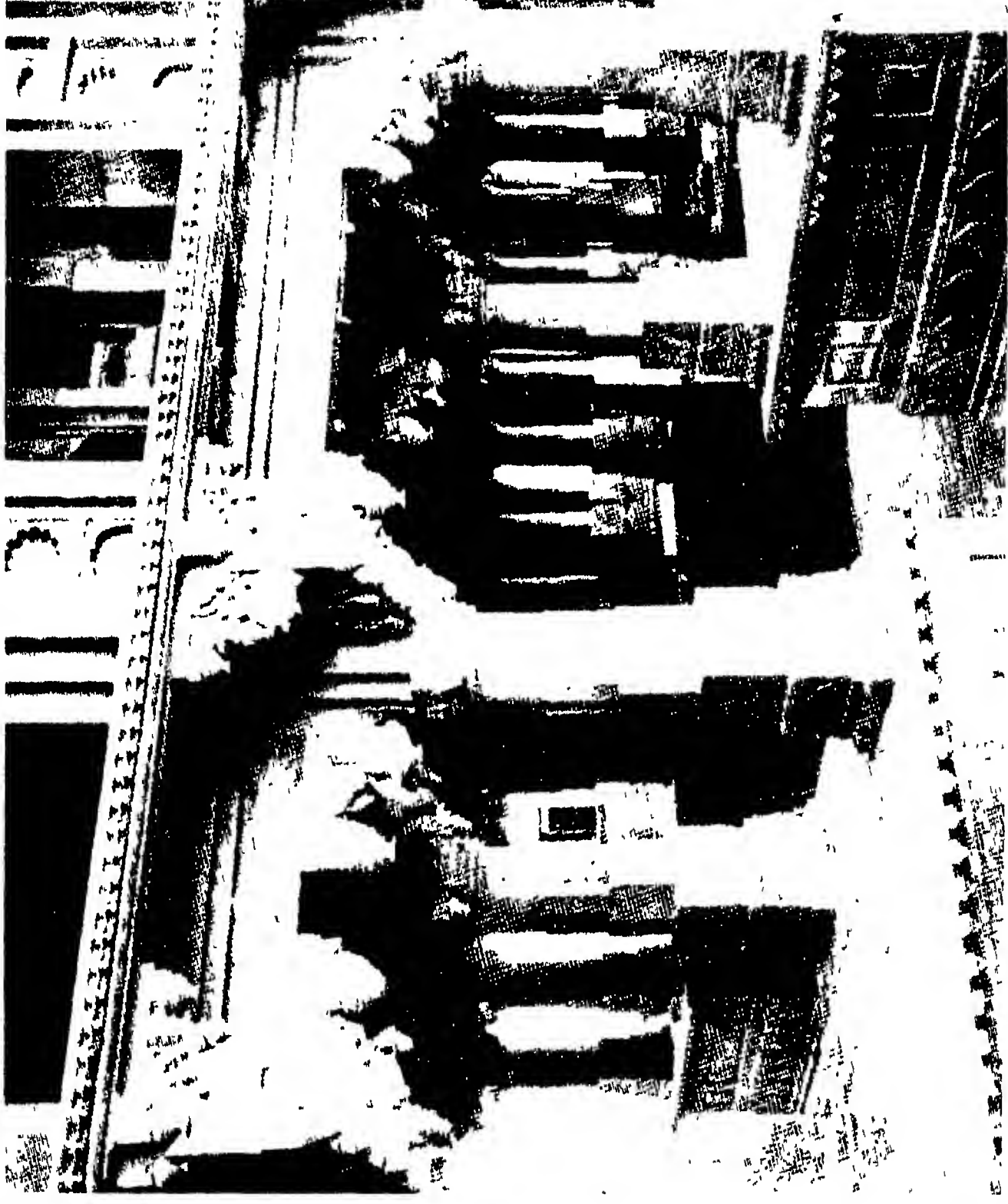
The difference between the Hindus and Muslims is deep-rooted and ineradicable. We are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions. In short, we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of International law we are a nation.

( Reported in *The Bombay Chronicle*, 3. 7. 1942 )

This description may be applied more truly to the Islamic nations outside India, but it is not literally true of Indian Muslims, unless all that we have noticed is pure fiction. The Indian Muslims, no doubt, have differences in some matters enumerated by Mr Jinnah ; but these differences are neither so *deep-rooted* nor so *ineradicable* as to demand absolute political separation. They are differences such as exist between men and women, complementary and not contradictory : differences that provide a basis for union rather than separation. ' The two religions ', Kabir said with great insight, ' are like two branches of a tree ; in the middle is a sprout surpassing both. ' He further argued :



**JAHANGIRI MAHAL : Agra**



**GOVIND DEO TEMPLE : Brindaban**

**COMMON MOTIFS IN HINDU AND MUSLIM ARCHITECTURE**



If God be within the mosque, then to whom does the rest of the world belong ?

If Ram be within the image, then who is there to know what is happening without ?

Hari is in the east ; Allah is in the west ; look within your own heart, for there you will find both Karim and Ram.

All the men and women of the world are His living forms.

Kabir is the child of Allah and Ram ; He is my *guru* : He is my *Pir*.

Vain, too, are the distinctions of caste ; all shades of colour are but broken arcs of light.

All varieties in human nature are but fragments of Humanity.

The right to approach God is not the monopoly of the Brahmans, but it belongs to all who are sincere of heart.

Kabir was a Hindu foundling, brought up by a Muslim weaver, and inspired by the Hindu saint Ramanand. There were several others like Kabir in their outlook and teaching, like Dadu in Rajputana, and Malukdas at Allahabad. ' I belong not to any of the four castes, ' declared the great founder of Sikhism. ' Nanak is with those who are low-born among the lowly. ' His advice was :

Make kindness thy mosque, sincerity thy prayer-carpet,  
what is just and lawful thy Quran,

Modesty thy circumcision, civility thy fasting ; so shalt thou be a Musulman.

Make right conduct thy Ka'bah, truth thy spiritual guide, good works thy creed and thy prayer,

The will of God thy rosary ; and God will preserve thine honour.

The influence of such teachings was indeed great and leavened the entire culture of the masses. We

have no space for more illustrations. One of the Siddhars of South India sang :

In all this blessed land  
 There is but one caste,  
 One tribe, and one brotherhood,  
 One God doth dwell above,  
 And He hath made us ONE  
 In birth and frame and tongue !

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## CHAPTER III.

### IN THE TRACK OF THE TOURISTS

*' There is no happiness for him who does not travel; living in the society of men, the best man often becomes a sinner. Indra is the friend of the traveller; therefore wander. '*

AITAREYA BRAHMANA

IN the long course of our history, not only have various races come into this country and made it their permanent home, but innumerable individual travellers have also been attracted by India in all times, and they have left behind them very interesting impressions of what they saw and felt. One of the earliest of such foreigners was Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya, who stayed here from about 302 B. C. to 288 B. C. He has described the country, its soil, climate, animals and plants, its government and religion, the manners of its people and their arts—in short, the whole of Indian life from the King to the remotest tribe; and he has scanned every object with a mind sound and unprejudiced, without overlooking even trifles and minute circumstances. He has pointed out that the country was well irrigated, and that it produced two crops annually. 'Famine has never visited India,' he writes, 'and there has never been a general scarcity in the supply of nourishing food. The inhabitants, having abundant means of subsistence, exceed in consequence the ordinary stature, and are distinguished by their proud bearing. They are also well skilled in the arts, as might be expected of men who inhale a pure air and drink the very finest water.' (Mc. 30) According to Arrian's report, the Indians



were in person slender and tall, and of much lighter weight than other men. ( *ib.* 226 )

Megasthenes considered one custom 'prescribed by their ancient philosophers, truly admirable: for the law ordains that no one among them shall, under any circumstances, be a slave; but enjoying freedom they shall respect the equal right to it which all possess. Those, they thought, who have learnt neither to domineer nor to cringe, will attain the life best adapted to all vicissitudes.' ( *ib.* 38 ) 'All Indians are free,' adds Arrian, 'and not one of them is a slave; the Indians do not even use aliens as slaves, and much less a countryman of their own.' ( *ib.* 211-12 ) Further: 'Whereas among other nations it is usual, in the contest of war, to ravage the soil and reduce it to an uncultivated waste, among the Indians—who regarded the husbandmen as a class that is sacred and inviolable—the tillers of the soil, even when battle is raging in the neighbourhood, are undisturbed by any sense of danger; for the combatants on either side, in waging the conflicts, make carnage of each other, but allow those engaged in cultivation to remain quite unmolested. Besides, they neither ravage an enemy's land with fire, nor cut down its trees.' ( *ib.* 32 )

Pliny, the Roman historian of the first century A. D., writing in the time of the emperor Claudius ( 41-54 A. D. ), speaks of the hospitality of the Indians in another part of the country, far removed from that visited by Megasthenes. He describes the Ceylonese as a people 'exceeding the ordinary stature of mankind and looking upon a hundred years as but a moderate span of life.' Though they are isolated from the rest of the world, he observes, they are not 'exempt from our vices: even there gold and silver are held in esteem! Their articles of luxury surpass our own, and they have

them in great abundance; their wealth is greater than ours, but we excel them in the art of deriving enjoyment from opulence. Their festive occasions are spent in hunting, their favourite game being the tiger and the elephant. The land is carefully tilled, and though the vine is not cultivated, other fruits are abundant. Great delight is taken in fishing, especially in catching turtles, beneath the shells of which whole families are housed' [ obviously using them for tiles ]. ( F. N. 49-52 ) Megasthenes confirms these impressions, from hearsay reports, and further states : ' The island has palm-groves where the trees are planted with wonderful regularity, all in a row, in the way we see the keepers of pleasure parks plant out shady trees in the choicest spots. It has also herds of elephants, which are there very numerous and of the largest size; these are more powerful than those on the mainland, and in appearance larger, and may be pronounced more intelligent in every possible way. The islanders export them to the mainland opposite, in boats which they construct expressly for this traffic, from wood supplied by the thickets of the island; and they dispose of their cargoes to the king of the Kalingai. ' ( Mc. 174-75 )

Between the fifth and the seventh centuries A. D., we have still more copious accounts of our civilization and culture, given by a stream of Chinese pilgrims who were attracted hither chiefly on account of their Buddhist faith. Chief among these were Fa Hian, Hiuen Tsang, and I-Tsing. The first was in India from 405 to 411 A. D., the second from 630 to 645 A. D., and the third visited Nalanda in 645 A. D.

Fa Hian visited important centres like Gaya and Pataliputra, and finally left for China by the sea-route, sailing from Tamralipti ( Tamluk in Bengal ) *via* Ceylon

and Java. He recorded his impressions in a book called *Ko-Sang-Chuen*. Entering India by the north-western passes, he found Buddhism flourishing in many places. There were hundreds of *sangharamas* where pilgrims were hospitably entertained for three days, after which they went further on their way. At Peshawar he saw a *stupa* which ' tradition says is the highest of the towers in Jambu-Dvipa. ' Of all *stupas* and temples seen by the travellers, writes Fa Hian in admiration, ' none can compare with this in beauty of form and strength ; it is adorned with all sorts of precious substances. ' ( B. R. xxxii ) Moving eastwards, he found ' the kings of these countries are all Buddhists, firm believers in the law of the Buddha ; they remove their caps of state when they make offerings to the priests. The members of the royal household and the chief ministers personally direct the alms-giving.... The rules relating to the alms-giving have been handed down from the time of the Buddha till now. '

In Madhya Desha, the climate was warm and equable, without frost or snow. The people were very well off, without poll-tax or official restrictions. Only those who tilled the royal lands returned a portion of their profits. ' If they desire to go, they go ; if they like to stop, they stop. The kings govern without capital punishment ; criminals are fined according to circumstances, lightly or heavily. Even in cases of repeated rebellion, they only cut off the right hand. ' ( ib. xxxvii )

Megasthenes was in Pataliputra during the third century B. C. Then he had considered it the greatest of the Indian cities, stretching full 80 stadia on each side, and surrounded by a moat 600 ft. wide and 30 cubits deep. The city-wall was pierced by 460 gates

and crowned with 570 towers. All that had now vanished, though Fa Hian could see the ruins of Asoka's magnificent palace; its sculptured designs, he says, 'are no human work'. By the side of the tower of Asoka was a *sangharama*, 'very imposing and elegant' and belonging to the Great Vehicle (*Mahayana*). There was also a temple of the Little Vehicle (*Hinayana*). Together they contained about 600-700 priests: their behaviour was 'decorous and orderly': 'Here one may see eminent priests from every quarter of the world. The Brahman teacher is called Manjusri: the Great *sramanas* of the country, all the *bhikshus* attached to the Great Vehicle, esteem and reverence him. He resides in this *sangharama*. Of all the kingdoms of Mid-India, the towns of this country are especially large. The people are rich and prosperous, and they practise virtue and justice. There are hospitals to which the poor of all countries, the destitutes and cripples, repair. They receive every kind of requisite help, gratuitously; physicians examine their cases, order them food and medicines, drinks and decoctions — everything in fact that may contribute to their ease. When cured, they depart at their convenience.' (ib. lvii)

Hiuen Tsang spent eight out of his fifteen years' stay in India, at the court of Sri Harsha of Kanauj; during the remaining seven years, he sojourned through the entire land, including the far south. Starting from China, when he was hardly thirty years of age, he braved the dangers and hardships of his long journey over high mountains and flooded rivers, through thick forests and burning deserts — all for the love of the Great Master Buddha who was born in India. 'Hiuen Tsang's account, being that of an eye-witness,' H. G. Rawlinson observes, 'is one of the most important

documents on medieval India which we possess, and is worth quoting in detail.' When the pilgrim returned to China, he carried back with him a precious load — of 657 Indian MSS of Buddhist works and images in gold, silver, crystal and sandal-wood. (I. C. H. 113)

One of the things which impressed Hiuen Tsang in India was that 'the Kshatriyas and Brahmans are cleanly and wholesome in their dress, and they live in a homely and frugal way.' There were rich merchants, who dealt in gold trinkets and so on, but the people went about mostly bare-footed. [Arrian, however, reports the statement of one Nearchus who found 'they wore shoes of white leather and elaborately trimmed, while the soles are variegated and made of great thickness to make the wearer seem so much the taller.' — Mc. 225] They stained their teeth red or black, bound their hair and pierced their ears for ornaments. They were very particular in their personal cleanliness: all washed before eating, never used food left over from a former meal, and destroyed wooden and stone-vessels after use; metal ones were polished and rubbed. After eating, they cleaned their mouths with a willow-stick and washed their hands. 'Every time they perform the functions of nature they wash their bodies and use perfumes of sandal-wood or turmeric. Until these ablutions are finished, they do not touch each other.' (B.R. 76-77)

About the moral standards, also, his observations are worthy of notice. Although the people were naturally light-minded, he saw that they were 'upright and honourable'. In money matters they were without craft, 'and in administering justice, they are considerate. They dread the retribution of another world and make light of the present state. They are not deceitful, or treacherous in their conduct, and are faithful to their

oaths and promises. In their rules of government, there is remarkable rectitude, while in their behaviour there is much gentleness and sweetness.' (ib. 83-84)

His description of the people of the Deccan has been often quoted: 'The disposition of these people is honest and simple. They are tall of stature, and of a stern vindictive nature. To their benefactors they are grateful, but to their enemies relentless. If they are insulted they will risk their lives to avenge themselves. If they are asked to help one in distress, they will forget themselves in their haste to render assistance. If they are to seek revenge they give their enemy warning; then, being armed, they attack with lances. If one turns to flee, they do not kill a man who submits. If a general loses a battle, they do not inflict punishment, but present him with woman's clothes, and he is driven to seek death for himself.' (ib. ii. 255-56)

I-Tsing, visiting the country forty years later, when the great Harsha was no more, found that conditions had somewhat deteriorated. He was more than once attacked by robbers in the vicinity of the famous University of Nalanda in Bihar, in 685 A.D. However, he found the Buddhist monasteries still flourishing, in spite of the rules being stricter than what they were at Tamralipti. The number of resident priests exceeded 3000. The lands in the possession of the monasteries comprised more than 200 villages. They had been bestowed upon them by kings of many generations. 'Thus the prosperity of the religion,' writes I-Tsing, 'continues owing to nothing but the fact that the *Vinaya* is being strictly carried out. Since the number of priests is very great, it is difficult to assemble so many in one place. There are eight halls and three hundred apart-



ments in Nalanda, and the worship takes place separately, as most convenient to each member.' ( T. 651, 44 )

Then came the Islamic flood. Even before the regular conquest had begun there was, as we have noted before, infiltration by individual Arabs. Their impressions have been collected together in an interesting book by Professor Nainar of Madras University ( *Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India*, 1942 ). They are unanimous in describing 'Balhara', as they call Amoghavarsha Rashtrakuta, as the greatest king known to them in India. One of them ( Suleiman ) says that ' in the whole country of the Hindus there is none more affectionate to the Arabs than Balhara; and, likewise, his subjects also profess the same love for the Arabs. The Balhara kings live for a long period; many have ruled for fifty years. The people of the country of Balhara believe that the longevity of their kings and their prosperity are due to their love for the Arabs.' This is evidently an euphemism for the blessings of trade with Arabia and the Western world.

' There is no sovereign either in Sind or Hind,' writes another Arab ( Mas'udi ), 'who honours the Muslims like the Balhara. In his kingdom mosques and cathedrals are built, and prayers held regularly in them.' Istakhri reports the extraordinary privileges enjoyed by the Muslims under the Rashtrakutas : ' In all these cities ruled over by the infidel kings, the Muslims will not tolerate the exercise of authority, nor the imposition of punishment, nor the testimony of a witness, except by Muslims. But in some parts I have seen Muslims seeking non-Muslim witnesses with a reputation for honesty, and the other party is satisfied. Otherwise, a Muslim takes his place, and the decision is reached.' (pp. 162-4)

The prince of Muslim travellers, however, was Al Beruni. He came with the better known Mahmud of Ghazni ( 1000-30 A.D. ). Dr Sachau, his translator, speaks of him as one ' independent in his thoughts about religion and philosophy, a friend of clear, determined and manly words. He abhors half-truths, veiled words, and wavering action. Everywhere he comes forward as a champion of his convictions with the courage of a man. He is a stern judge, both of himself and of others.' ( A.I. xix-xx ) He wrote for the information of Muslims who wished to discuss with the Hindus questions of religion, science, or literature ' on the basis of their own civilization '. ( ii. 246 ) For this task Al Beruni was eminently qualified by virtue of his own attainments in Astronomy, Mathematics, Physics, Geography, Chemistry, Mineralogy, Philosophy, Religion and Literature. He wrote about twenty books on India alone, including translations and original compositions (xxvii). Such a witness and critic, therefore, is worthy of our most earnest attention.

Before coming to India, Al Beruni had already read the *Brahma-Siddhanta* and the *Khandakhadyaka*, in the editions of Alfazari and Yakub ibn Tarik, as well as *Charaka*, in the edition of Ali ibn Zain, and the *Panchatantra*, or *Kalila and Dimna*, in Arabic. In India he resumed his studies from original Sanskrit texts with the help of Pandits. He found that Brahmagupta, who was the standard in 770 A.D., was still holding his ground in Astronomy in 1020. In medicine, he translated a Sanskrit treatise on loathsome diseases, but his main interest was in religion and philosophy. His quotations from the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Manu-smriti* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, bear testimony to his wide learning. Al Beruni explains : ' I have written this book on the doctrines of



the Hindus, never making any unfounded imputations, and at the same time not considering it inconsistent with my duties as a Muslim to quote their own words at full length, when I thought this would contribute to elucidate a subject. If the contents of these quotations happen to be utterly heathenish,...we can only say that such is the belief of the Hindus, and they themselves are best qualified to defend it.' (ib. i. 7) He translated books on the Sankhya and Yoga, and comparing them with the Greek, Christian and Sufi doctrines, found 'much in common between these systems'. (ib. 8)

He found the Hindus rather too exclusive, but remarks: 'It is a trait common to all nations towards each other.' The repugnance against foreigners, he further explains, 'increased more and more when the Muslims began to make their inroads into their country .....All these events planted a deeply rooted hatred in their hearts.....Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country and performed there wonderful exploits by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason, too, why Hindu sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hand cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Benares and other places. And there the antagonism between them and all foreigners receives more and more nourishment, both from political and religious sources.' After these frank observations, his criticism of the Hindus must be accepted as that of a candid friend. The taboos of caste, he points out, 'render any connection with them quite impossible and

constitute the widest gulf between them and us.' (ib. 19-22 )

According to the Hindus, says Al Beruni, ' there is no other country but theirs, no other race but theirs, no created beings besides them, have any knowledge or science whatsoever. If they travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their minds, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation is. One of their scholars, Varahamihira, in a passage where he calls on his people to honour the Brahmans, says : " The Greeks, though impure, must be honoured, since they were trained in the sciences and therein excelled others. What then are we to say of a Brahman if he combines with his purity the height of science ? " — In former times, the Hindus used to acknowledge that the progress of science, due to the Greeks, is more important than that which is due to themselves. ' ( ib. 22-23 )

More than a century and a half later, a Jewish traveller from Spain, Benjamin of Tudela, visited Quilon ( Choulam ) c. 1170 A. D. Besides being impressed with the large-scale cultivation of pepper, cinnamon and ginger there, he also noted the custom of embalming the dead, of which indeed we have no other allusions in India. ' The inhabitants', he says, ' do not bury the dead but embalm with certain spices, put them upon stools and cover them with cloths — every family keeping apart. The flesh dries upon the bones, and as these corpses resemble living beings, every one of them recognises his parents and all the members of his family for many generations. ' There were also some sun-worshippers and about a hundred Jews, ' of black colour, but good men, observers of the Law...the Talmud and its decisions. ' The people are described as being

‘addicted to Astrology’. However, ‘this nation is trustworthy in matters of trade and, whenever foreign merchants enter their port, three secretaries of the king immediately repair on board their ships, write down their names and report them to him. The king thereupon grants them security for their property, which they may even leave in the open fields without any guards.’  
( F. N. 134-35 )

The Venetian Marco Polo, another celebrated European traveller, came to South India in 1293 A. D. He gives interesting information about the pearl-fisheries and the diamond mines, and speaks of ‘the best and most delicate buckrams ( muslins ) and those of highest price ; in sooth they look like tissue of spider’s web ! There is no king or queen but might be glad to wear them.’ The people, says he, have also the largest sheep in the world and great abundance of the necessaries of life. More than all this, he describes the merchants of Gujarat as ‘the most truthful, for they would not tell a lie for anything in the world. If a foreign merchant who does not know the ways of the country entrusts his goods to them, they sell them in the most loyal manner, seeking zealously the profit of the foreigner, and asking no commission except what he pleases to bestow. They eat no flesh and drink no wine, and live a life of great chastity ; nor would they, on any account, take what belongs to another. This is what their Law commands. They are all distinguished by wearing a thread of cotton over one shoulder and tied under the other arm, so that it crosses the breast and the back. They have a rich and powerful king, who is eager to purchase precious stones and large pearls, and he sends his merchants into the kingdom of Ma’bar — called Soli ( Chola ) — which is the best and noblest province of India, and where the

best pearls are found — to fetch as many as they can get ; and he pays them double the cost-price for all. So, in this way, he has a vast treasure of such valuables. ' ( F. H. 175-6 )

Like Hiuen Tsang in the north, Marco Polo was struck by the personal hygiene of the Indians in the south : ' It is their practice, ' he writes in almost identical language, ' that every one, male and female, does wash the whole body twice every day ; and those who do not wash are looked upon much as we look upon our heretics. You must also know that in eating they use the right hand only, and would not, on any account, touch their food with the left hand. All cleanly and becoming uses are ministered by the right hand, while the left is reserved for the uncleanly and disagreeable necessities ... So also, they drink only from vessels set apart for the purpose, and every man hath his own ; no one will drink from any other vessel. When they drink they do not put the vessel to their lips, but hold it aloft and let the drink spout into the mouth. No one would, on any account, touch the vessel with his mouth, nor allow a stranger to drink with it. If the stranger have no vessel of his own, they pour the drink into his hands, that he may drink as from a cup. ' He also adds, ' They are very strict in executing justice upon the criminals, and as strict in abstaining from wine. Indeed, they have made it a rule that wine-bibbers and sea-faring men shall never be accepted as sureties. ' ( ib. 169 )

A contemporary of the Venetian, a Christian friar named John of Monte Corvino also visited India, ( c. 1292-93 ) and he has recorded his impressions in a letter of remarkable interest. Says he, ' I have seen the greater part of India and made enquiries about the rest,

and can say that it would be most profitable to preach the faith of Christ there, if the brethren would but come. But none should be sent except men of the most solid character; for those regions are very tempting, abounding in aromatic spices and precious stones. But they possess few of our fruits, and, on account of the great mildness and warmth of the climate, the people there go naked, only covering the loins. Thus the arts and crafts of our tailors and cordwainers are not needed, for they have perpetual summer and no winter.....I baptised there about a hundred persons.' ( Yule, iii. 57 )

Three decades later, 1223-30, another friar (Jordanus) also noted the possibilities that India provided for conversions. He came across fire-worshipping Parsis ' who neither buried nor burnt their dead, but exposed them to the fowls of heaven, uncovered on a roofless tower. They believed in two First Principles, to wit, of Evil and of Good, of Darkness and of Light, matters which at present I do not propose to discuss.....The pagans of this India have prophecies of their own, that *we Latins are to subjugate the whole world* ! In this India there is a scattered people, one here and one there, who call themselves Christians, but are not so ; nor have they baptism, nor do they know anything else about the faith. Nay, they believe that St Thomas the Great was Christ himself ! There, in the India I speak of, I baptised and brought into the faith about 300 souls, of whom many were idolators and Saracens.' ( F. N. 203-4 )

This stream of missionaries, travellers and other visitors, is indeed endless ; but we cannot miss some of the more important ones. Among such was Ibn Battuta, a contemporary of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, who was in India during 1333-45. He has described his journey through ' the land of Pepper ' ( Malabar ) thus :

'It extends along the sea-coast for a length of two months' journey from Sandabur [Goa] to Kulam [Quilon]. For the whole distance, the road passes under the shade of trees. At every half-mile there is a wooden structure with platforms, on which all travellers, Muslim or infidel, may sit. Near each of these rest-houses there is a well for drinking, and an infidel is placed in charge of it. He supplies the water in vessels to infidels; in the case of Muslims, he pours the water into their hands, and continues to do so until they signal him to stop. The idolators of Malabar do not allow Muslims to enter their houses or eat from their vessels. If a Muslim should do the contrary, they break the vessel, or give it to the Muslim. When a Mussulman goes to a place where there is no house belonging to his class, the infidels cook the food and serve it to him on banana leaves; dogs and birds eat what is left over.....On this road it is safer to travel than anywhere else, for the Hindus put to death anyone who steals even a single coconut. When a fruit drops on the ground, no one picks it up until the owner takes it. Mussulmans are held in the highest regard in this country.....There are twelve infidel sultans in Malabar; but there is no discord among them and the strong does not covet what the weak possesses. When a Mussulman or infidel flees from one state to another, on account of some delinquency, and reaches the gate of security of a neighbouring prince, he is safe and cannot be caught by him from whom he had fled, though he may be powerful having many troops at his disposal.'

(ib. 235-7)

During the 15th century and after, a number of Portuguese and other European travellers came to India by the sea route. Duarte Barbosa, Megallan's cousin, was one of them. He wrote an account of his voyages in 1516. He speaks of Cambay as 'a great city with handsome houses of stone and white-washed clay, very lofty, with windows set in streets and squares amidst orchards and groves.' The inhabitants included many



workmen and mechanics who spun cloths of white cotton, fine and coarse fabrics of silk and velvet, and who carved ivory, and were experts with the turning lathe, making bed-steads, chess-men and beads of large size—brown, yellow and blue. They cut precious stones, and were experts in fabricating sham jewellery and imitation pearls. They were excellent silver-smiths, and their women produced very beautiful needle-work. The Hindus of Cambay were exceedingly cleanly people, washing frequently, and delighting to perfume their bodies and hair, and wear in their hair — both men and women — jasmine and other flowers. They were fond of music, played on various kinds of instruments, and indulged in much singing. When they travelled about the city, it was in carts drawn by oxen or horses. These carts were filled with rich mattresses, and were closed like our broughams and shut carriages, supplied with windows. In their houses the Cambayans love to make collections of porcelain which they keep in well arranged glass cupboards. ( P. I. 117, 135-6 )

Another city visited by Barbosa was Vijayanagara, or Narsinga as most foreigners called it. But before proceeding with his description, we may notice here the impressions of the Persian Abdur Razzaq, who was in Vijayanagara in 1442-43. He considered the city of 'Bijanagar' such 'that the pupil of the eye has never seen a place like it, and the ear of intelligence has never been informed, that there exists anything like it in the world.' It was built in such a manner that seven citadels, and the same number of walls, enclosed each other. Around the first citadel were stones of the height of a man, one half of which was sunk in the ground, while the other half rose above it. These were fixed, one beside the other, in such a manner that no horse or foot soldier

could boldly, or with ease, approach the citadel. The space which separated the first from the second citadel, and up to the third, was filled with cultivated fields and houses and gardens. In the space between the third and the seventh fortresses, one met numerous crowds of people, many shops and a bazar. By the king's palace there were four such bazars placed opposite each other. On the north side was the portico of the palace of the Rai [ king ]. Above each bazar was a lofty arcade with a magnificent gallery, but the audience-hall of the king's palace was elevated above all the rest. The bazars were extremely long and broad. Roses were sold everywhere. These people could not live without roses, and they looked upon them quite as necessary as food. .... Each class of men, belonging to each profession, had shops contiguous the one to the other. The jewellers sold publicly in the bazars, pearls, rubies, emeralds and diamonds. In this agreeable locality, as well as in the king's palace, one saw numerous running streams and canals formed of chiselled stone, polished and smooth. .... ' This empire contains so great a population that it would be impossible to give an idea of it, without entering into extensive details. In the king's palace are several cells, like basins, filled with bullion forming one mass. ' ( F. E. 88-92 )

Twenty years before Abdur Razzaq, in 1420-21, the Italian Nicolo Conti had observed : ' In this city there are estimated to be 90,000 men fit to bear arms. The king is more powerful than all the other kings of India. ' Barbosa, in 1516, described Vijayanagara as the seat of an active commerce in country diamonds, rubies from Pegu, silks of China and Alexandria, and cinnabar, camphor, musk, pepper and sandal from Malabar. ' There is infinite trade in this city, and strict justice and truth are observed towards all by the governors of the country. '



There was complete tolerance towards Muslims, Hindus and Christians in the empire of Vijayanagara. (P. I. 136-9)

Domingo Paes (Portuguese) spoke of the metropolis, in 1520, as the best provided city in the world, and stocked with provisions such as rice, wheat, Indian corn and other grains, as barley, beans, moong, pulses, horse-gram, etc. There was a large store of these, and very cheap. (A. H. I. 374)

We shall close this survey of India, as witnessed by innumerable foreign travellers, with the description of Bengal by Bernier, French envoy to the court of Shah Jahan (1658-68) :

‘Bengale abounds with every necessary of life, and it is this abundance that has induced so many Portuguese, half-castes, and other Christians, driven from their different settlements by the Dutch, to seek an asylum in the fertile kingdom. The Jesuits and Augustines who have large churches, and are permitted the free and unmolested exercise of their religion, assured me that Ogouli [Hoogly] alone contains from eight to nine thousand Christians, and that in other parts of the kingdom their numbers exceeded five-and-twenty thousand. The rich exuberance of the country, together with the beauty and amiable disposition of the native women, has given rise to a proverb, in common use among the Portuguese, English and Dutch, that the kingdom of Bengale has a hundred gates for entrance, but not one for departure. In regard to valuable commodities, of a nature to attract foreign merchants I am acquainted with no other country where so great a variety is found. Besides sugar, there is in Bengale such quantity of cotton and silks, that the kingdom may be called the common store-house for those two kinds of merchandise, not of Hindoustan or the Empire of the Great Mogul only, but of all the neighbouring kingdoms, and even of Europe. The English, the Portuguese, and the native merchants, deal also in these articles to a considerable extent. The same may be said of the silks and silkstuffs

of all sorts. It is not possible to conceive the quantity drawn every year from Bengale, for the supply of the whole Mogul Empire, as far as Lahore and Caboul [Kabul] and generally of all those foreign nations to which the cottons are sent.....The Dutch have, sometimes, seven or eight hundred natives employed in their silk factories at Kassem Bazar where, in like manner, the English and other merchants employ a proportionate number. Bengale is also the principal emporium for saltpetre. It is carried down the Ganges with great facility, and the Dutch and English send large cargoes to many parts of the Indies and to Europe. Lastly, it is from this fruitful kingdom that the best lac, opium, wax, civet, long-pepper and various drugs are obtained; and butter, which may appear to you an inconsiderable article, is in such plenty that, although it is a bulky article to export, yet it is sent to numberless places. (*Travels*, pp. 438-40)

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## CHAPTER IV

### TRUTH-BEAUTY-GOODNESS

*'The fundamental Unity of Creation was not simply a philosophical speculation for India: it was her life-object to realize this great harmony in feeling and in action.'*

सत्यमेव जयते  
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

OUR POET has in this one sentence brought out the Soul of Indian civilization, its most outstanding characteristic: its quest for the realization of the Great Harmony in thought and in action. This essential or fundamental Unity of Creation—*Ekam sat: viprah bahudha vadanti*—was also expressed by our seers in the triple pursuit of our lives: viz. SATYAM-SHIVAM-SUNDARAM. 'Truth, Beauty, and Goodness' neither keeps to the same sequence, nor reveals the deeper sense of Harmony implied in *Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram*. Other people have looked at these objectives separately, not in their Unity. Thus, Truth has been considered to be the special concern of Philosophers and Scientists; Beauty, that of Poets and Artists; and Goodness 'for its own sake' left to the Saints. The struggle for existence compelled the vast majority practically to ignore the highest values, for 'philosophy bakes no bread'. Hence, too, the daily practice of Religion is commenced with the prayer: 'Give us this day our daily BREAD'! Those who pursue other values are ridiculed as 'Utopian visionaries'; they lack 'realism'. Where men of deeper intuition conceived of a synthesis,

it was only partial : e. g. Keats was inspired by the Grecian Urn to declare :

Beauty is Truth, truth beauty—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Even the Chinese, who are more akin to us in spirit than any others, did not go beyond Confucius whose realism was expressed in the question : ‘Don’t know life ; how know death ?’ Indeed, the soul of a people is well expressed both in their Literature, Art and Philosophy, and in their daily lives and material pursuits. We shall therefore examine, in this chapter, the spirit of Indian culture as reflected in our literature, art and philosophy, as well as life—a good impression of which we have already gained through the writings of travellers of many countries and several centuries. What is important, however, to bear in mind is that literature, art and philosophy, in our case, have been more closely integrated with our life than, perhaps, is the case with any other people.

Tagore has characterized Vedic literature as ‘a poetic testament of a people’s collective reaction to the wonder and awe of existence’. This is well illustrated in the following lines from the *Rig-Veda* :

Who knows for certain ? who shall here declare it ?  
Whence was it born, and whence came this creation ?  
Then who can know from whence it has arisen ?  
None knoweth whence creation has arisen ;  
Whether He has or has not produced it :  
He who surveys it in the highest heaven—  
He only knows, or haply He may not !

The scepticism underlying this apostrophe is obviously different from that cynicism which made jesting Pilate ask, ‘What is Truth ?’, because he would not wait for an answer. The Aryan *rishis* and their Indian descendants,

on the other hand, relentlessly pursued the quest, though it had dawned on their minds that 'Truth cannot be attained by mere study of the Scriptures, nor by intellectual reasoning alone, nor by frequently hearing and talking about it...' They came to the conclusion that 'He who has not turned away from evil conduct, whose senses are uncontrolled, who is not tranquil, whose mind is not at rest, he can never attain Truth—even by much study.' We do not find this correlation of a man's character and conduct with the pursuit of truth, in the case of those who have carried it on, ostensibly, 'for its own sake'. A scientist or philosopher in the modern world is not *necessarily* expected to be morally of the same calibre as he is intellectually ; for 'truth' is 'academic', not *Vital*. Hence also, it is the preserve of the specialist, and forms part of the ethical code of the decalogue, only in a different sense. In the realm of art, too, the bifurcation assigns exclusive spheres to ethics and aesthetics. The 'stars' of Hollywood need not be paragons of virtue. 'Art for art's sake' may lead its votaries whither it listeth. But this is not the Indian view.

In India the pursuit of Truth-Beauty-Goodness was a characteristic of the common life. Every one participated in it, consciously or unconsciously, according to one's stage in life ; but it did not depend upon either age, sex, or caste. We shall describe these stages of life, and their respective qualities, in the next chapter. They went under the name of *Varnāshrama* and *Chaturvidha Purushārtha*. But there was a common heritage which all shared, according to their capacity for assimilation. This was the heritage of Truth-Beauty-Goodness. We shall give a few illustrations.

First of all, the quest of Truth. 'Ye shall know the Truth, and Truth shall make ye free': The acquisition of this knowledge was not for the sake of power; it was for the sake of freedom which meant Immortality. Thus, Maitreyi — a woman — asks her enlightened husband: 'Tell me, my lord, if this whole earth belonged to me, should I be immortal by it or no?' Yajñavalkya answers: 'No, even like the life of the rich will be thy life; there is no hope of Immortality through wealth'. (*Br. Up.* iv) We need not follow the ensuing discourse on the nature of *Ātman*, for our main point here is, such questions were raised and discussed by women. Another famous instance is that of Savitri, the wife of Satyavan (lit. the truthful). This cannot be brushed aside as a mere legend, because, even if it be the creation of a poet's imagination—which is not the belief of Indian women—it is a legend that has moulded the character of living women in this country, through the centuries, effectively; indeed more so than that of their sisters in Europe by the legend of Alcestis. Truth to an Indian woman is not a mere intellectual abstraction: it takes the concrete shape of being true to her husband. In hundreds of historical instances, she actually followed her life-partner to the funeral pyre. This is *sati* which Akbar attempted to confine only to absolutely voluntary cases, and which ultimately Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Lord William Bentinck helped to suppress. Without suggesting that it deserved any other fate, we might take it as a token, in genuine instances, of the extent to which ideals in India were pursued in practical life. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy writes:

Matter-of-fact accounts of more modern 'suttees' are given by Englishmen, who have witnessed them. One which took place in Baroda in 1825 is described by R.

Hartley Kennedy : the widow persisting in her intention in spite of "several fruitless endeavours to dissuade her". A more remarkable case is described by Sir Frederick Halliday. Here, also, a widow resisted all dissuasion, and finally proved her determination by asking for a lamp, and holding her finger in the flame until it was burnt and twisted like a quill-pen held in the flame of a candle ; all this time she gave no sign of fear or pain whatsoever. Sir F. Halliday had, therefore, to grant her wish, even as Akbar had had to do three centuries earlier.

(*The Dance of Siva*)

Such relentlessness in the pursuit of ideals once conceived—however foolish or suicidal it may appear to modern critics—was a characteristic of ancient and medieval India. The practice of *Jauhar* by Rajputnis (and recently as reported in the press by the women of East Bengal) and the practice of *Sallekhana* or *Samādhi-marana* by Jain *sādhus*, are examples of the same psychology, which refused to confine philosophy merely to academic contemplation.

From grown-up men and women, we might turn to mere children like Prahlada, Dhruva and Nachiketas. Here, too, it is well to remember that we are taking literature as a mirror of the mind of the people. They might be the creations of grown-up-men, but deliberately put as models before their own children, even like the boy-Nelson, the boy-Washington and the boy-Edison, in Western countries today. 'Can we be said to live', asks Nachiketas, 'while thou dost reign, O Yama?' He too yearns for Immortality like Maitreyi :

There is a heavenly realm where fear comes not :  
 Thou art not there, nor is there fear of ill :  
 Death and decay come not : hunger and thirst  
 Are left behind. So mortal men come there  
 Where sorrow is not, tasting heavenly joy.



Tell me, O Death, for thou alone canst tell,  
That higher sacrifice by which men win  
To Immortality. Pray tell me,  
For I have Faith.

( *Kath. Up.* )

Indeed, such examples could only appeal to a people who had Faith ; but they are no more to be ridiculed than the Japanese committing *harakiri* or being blown to bits in a 'human-torpedo', or the doctor-scientist who experiments upon himself and dies in consequence, in the hope of saving humanity ultimately.

India has lived because she has always believed in the power of sacrifice, both in the individual and in the mass ; but for this readiness to sacrifice, one cannot understand the amount of suffering she has undergone in recent years for the attainment of her ideal of *Swaraj*. It is not to be forgotten that we are the descendants of a people who conceived of a Shibi-chakravarti who, in order to save a mere pigeon from being preyed upon by a hawk, gave, in exchange, flesh from his own royal body. This is also the land of Sakya-muni who gave up the government of a principality to rule forever over the hearts of millions of men. It is the land where alone people, instead of praying for daily bread—even when starved bodily, as they are today—meditate on the *Gāyatri* which means : 'I contemplate on the effulgence of the Source of all Light ; let him illumine me'.

*From the unreal lead me to the Real,  
From darkness lead me to Light,  
From death lead me to Immortality !*

This was the outlook that was sought to be fostered from our very childhood. We were taught that we are the 'Children of the Immortal' : *Amritasya Putrah*.



*Ahimsā-Satya-Asteya-Brahmacharya* were the ideals inculcated in the young. The first thing in the morning after getting up from sleep was to contemplate—not bed-tea—but the ‘well-being of the Soul’: *Prātarutthāya chintayet ātmano hitam*. The other instructions were : *Satyam vada, Dharmam chara*—‘Speak the Truth and tread the path of *Dharma*’; *Svādhyāyānmā-pramada*—‘Mix no frivolity with your studies’ ; neglect not your duties towards Parents, Teachers, Guests, and God’s creatures. Be charitable towards all, and give generously, and with sympathy ; but never without humility’. (*Tait. Up.* 11) These were the traditional teachings. In the same spirit, Gautama Buddha asked the Kshatriyas (the class to which he himself belonged ) to be kind, to oppress no one—for all love their lives ; and told the priests that a moral life was better than ritual-sacrifices. ‘He is a true Brahman who leads a pure life ; better than matted locks and ashes are Truth and Moderation.’ How even ‘truth’ (as an academic abstraction) was subordinated, generally, to the exigencies of other social obligations, may be illustrated by reference to the familiar advice : *Satyam brūyāt, priyam brūyāt ; na brūyāt satyam-apriyam*—‘Truth should be told, but subject to the rules of gentility’. This might be interpreted as an application of the rule of *Ahimsā*, which is given the first place in our decalogue of moral conduct. In its positive sense, it meant love and service ; though, negatively, it is translated into ‘non-violence’. ‘Not by anger are the angry overcome ; the wicked are overcome by goodness’. This is the very antithesis of the law of ‘a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye’, which unfortunately rules the minds of men of ‘lesser breed’. But India ever proclaims :

O Joy ! We live in bliss :  
 Among men of hate, hating none ;  
 Let us indeed live without hatred.

*'For hatred does not cease with hatred : hatred ceases with love !'*

This wisdom has permeated the masses of India, because, in spite of their notorious illiteracy, they have imbibed a culture which is an embodiment of the philosophy taught in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the Buddhist scriptures, the Epics and the *Purānas*. The instruments of public education, in this respect, have not been the formal schools, so much as our arts and architecture, sculptures on the walls of temples, paintings such as those of Ajanta and Sigiriya, and the fireside stories of the heroes and heroines from *Itihāsa* and *Purāna*, further illustrated in the popular dramas, and dances accompanied with folk-music. The *Bhakti* school, or *Bhāgavata Sampradāya*, carried forward this work of popular education through the teachings and example of its great teachers. It is a well-known fact that most of these teachers or saints belonged more often to the lower strata of our social hierarchy than to the higher. This in itself is evidence of the degree to which the people were saturated with the thoughts and ideals coming down from the ancient sages. Only a few illustrations of the most popular literature of this class should suffice for our purpose.

Tulasidas has been by far the most popular among the masses of North India, perhaps, only with the exception of Chaitanya in Bengal. He has been described as 'the tallest tree in the Magic Garden of medieval Hindu poesy'. 'That Hindu', writes Vincent A. Smith, 'was the greatest man of his age in India—greater even than Akbar himself, inasmuch as the

conquest of the hearts and minds of millions of men and women, effected by the poet, was an achievement infinitely more lasting than any or all the victories gained in war by his contemporary monarch'. In his great poem, *Rāmacharita-mānas*, the mother of the infant Sri Ramachandra soliloquizes :

Thou we know by revelation : heaven and earth and all  
creation, in each hair of thy body may be found ;

In my arms thou sweetly dreamest, O mystery  
supremest, far beyond the comprehension of a sage—  
the most profound.

'My lot is low, my purpose high,' says Tulasidas, 'but I am confident of one thing—that the good will be gratified to hear me, though fools may laugh.....If my homely speech, and poor wit, are fit subjects for laughter, let them laugh ; it is no fault of mine. If they have no understanding of true devotion to the Lord, the tale will remain insipid enough ; but to the true and orthodox worshippers of Hari and Hara, the story of Raghuvir will be sweet as honey !'

Another work of even greater popularity and importance, at all times in India, has been the *Bhagavad Gītā*. In the whole range of Sanskrit literature, wrote Lala Lajpat Rai, there is hardly any other book which is more widely read and admired by all classes of Hindus. The Brahmos and the Arya Samajists read it, quote it and comment upon it, as often and as admiringly as the Sanatanists and the Vedantists. It receives the same homage from the Ramanujis, the Vallabhacharis and the Vaishnavas, as from the Nanak-panthis, the Dadupanthis and the Gulabdasis. All the different classes of *sannyāsis* and *sādhus*, whose number is legion, read it, revere it, and quote it, in support of their conflicting



**INFANT KRISHNA ( *Bronze Image* ) : SOUTH INDIA**



dogmas and contradictory doctrines, and with equal confidence. There are vast numbers who have treasured it in their memories, and repeat the whole every morning or even twice a day. Many *sādhus* carry it in a small pocket-edition on their chest, hung round their necks by a thread. Of all the Sanskrit books, it has been published in the largest number of editions and sizes. There is no other book, even in any of the vernaculars of India, except perhaps the Tulasi *Rāmāyana* which is printed and sold so largely as the *Gītā*. Amongst the English-knowing Hindus, it is decidedly the most popular of all Hindu books. It has by far the largest number of translations in Hindi and the other spoken languages of India.

It was translated into Marathi, perhaps for the first time in any vernacular, by Dnaneshwar, at the close of the 13th century A. D. In this form, it has become a household treasure ever since, in the Deccan. Lok Tilak wrote his memorable commentary, *Gītārahasya* (or the Secret of the *Gītā*), in Marathi, while he was in Mandalay prison. He has interpreted the great work as a call to action or *Karma-yoga-shāstra*. The meaning of 'yoga', given in the *Gītā* itself, is '*yogah karmasu kaushalam*' or skill in action. But, for the majority of its Hindu readers, the special appeal of the *Gītā* rests in its inspiring assurance : ' Even if a vile person worships Me with undivided devotion, he may be regarded as a saint : soon he becomes a virtuous soul, and attains lasting peace. O Arjuna, this is My word of promise, that he who loves Me with all his heart shall never perish. Even persons of sinful origin attain the supreme goal by taking refuge in Me alone '. ( ix. 30-32 ) The ideal placed before India was that of the *Jīvan-mukta*, or 'the liberated in life' :

The man who hates no living thing,  
 Kind, patient, and humane,  
 Unselfish, unpretentious, calm  
 In pleasure as in pain.  
 Content, controlled and disciplined,  
 From wavering fancies free,  
 Whose brain and intellect and love  
 Are mine, is dear to me.  
 Abhorring none, by none abhorred,  
 Whom fear and fever flee,  
 With triumph and intolerance,  
 He too is dear to me.  
 He who, uncalculating, deft,  
 Scorning ambition's fee,  
 Impartial, pure, and imperturbed,  
 Loves me, is dear to me.

To give only one more instance, and that from the far south, Tiruvalluvar, who is supposed to have belonged to one of the lowest castes, writes in his great classic—the Tamil *Tiru-Kural* :

He lives home-life who stands in virtue's path,  
 And helps the Orders three in their good paths ;  
 He lives true home-life who's a help  
 To the lost, to the poor and to the dead ;  
 Pitris, gods, kin, one's guests and self—  
 To serve these five is duty chief.  
 Ne'er shall be lack of offspring in his house,  
 Who, fearing ill, gives ere he enjoys.  
 If in the home, true love and virtue dwell,  
 Home-life is full of grace and fruit.  
 If home-life is lived always in virtue's way,  
 What good is there in leaving house and home ?  
 He who lives home-life worthily  
 Shall first among all strivers be.  
 Home-life that helps the Saints, and swerves from  
 virtues ne'er,  
 Endures more trials than lonely hermit life.

Home-life itself is virtue's way ;  
The other too is good, if men no fault can find.  
He who lives home-life worthily on earth  
Will win a place 'mong gods who dwell in  
heaven.

This is a good illustration of several things: i. the penetration of Aryan ideas and ideals into the far south ; ii. their permeation among all classes including the lowest ; and iii. the emphasis laid on the importance of the house-holder's life of common virtues, as a path to salvation, no less than that of the hermit's. Instances of this type may be multiplied, almost endlessly, but we must refrain, for want of space. We must turn to other media of national culture, e. g. art, architecture, sculpture, music and dance. The last two are better listened to and witnessed, than described in words ; but it is well to remember that both are — because of their fluidity of expression — more dynamic and vital than either painting or sculpture, or architecture. 'Music,' says Tagore, 'is the purest form of art, for it suffers not from any barrier of alien material.' This is even more true of Indian music, which is least trammelled or encumbered with words or instruments. But, while music and dance may die with the artists, painting and the plastic arts endure longer, because of the durability of their materials. But, whatever the medium of expression, all Art is illustrative of the genius of a race. So is Indian art.

'There are two aspects of things, the outward and the inward,' writes Mahatma Gandhi ; 'the outward has no meaning except in so far as it helps the inward. All true art is thus an expression of the Soul. All true art must help the Soul to realise itself. ... Life is greater than all art ; and what is art without the sure founda-



tion and framework of a noble life? ' Here we have an enunciation of the inward emphasis of Indian art. Gandhiji looks upon Beauty only as an expression of Goodness and Truth : ' I see and find beauty in and through Truth,' he says ; ' whenever men begin to see Beauty in Truth, then true art will arise.' But ' Who will turn to an ascetic for a doctrine of art?' one might naturally ask. Still, in spite of his arid externals, Gandhiji is far from being unaesthetic : ' Whenever I admire the wonder of a sun-set,' he writes, ' or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in worship of the Creator. When I gaze at the star-sown heaven, and the infinite beauty it affords my eyes, that means to me more than all that human heart can give.... I want art and literature that can speak to the millions.' ( M. MG. 37-39 )

Indian Art does speak to millions, because it is popular in its origin as well as character. No less competent a critic than Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has stated : ' In India, it is the statement of a radical experience, and serves the purposes of life, like daily bread. Indian art has always been produced in response to a demand. . . . A race producing great art, however, does so, not by its " love of art ", but by its love of life.' ( I. I. A. v-viii ) At the same time, it is also esoteric. In the words of Annie Besant : ' Indian Art is a blossom of the Tree of the Divine Wisdom, full of suggestions from worlds invisible, striving to express the ineffable, and it can never be understood merely by the emotional and the intellectual ; only in the light of the Spirit can its inner significance be glimpsed.' This is so, because, as Rabindranath Tagore has said : ' As we become conscious of the harmony in our Soul, our apprehension of the blissfulness of the Spirit of the

World becomes universal, and the expression of beauty in our lives moves in goodness and love towards the Infinite.' This finds illustration in literature as well as art, because both are expressions of the outlook of the people; 'the smallest fragment of a textile portrays the same idealism as the most elaborate temple.' (Coomaraswamy) Its permeation among the masses, and its all-pervasiveness, are reflected in the following lines of Kabir :

Formless is He, yet hath a myriad forms,  
God of His creatures, and their Living Norm.  
His body infinite, unfathomable,  
Immaculate and indestructible.  
In rapture, dancing waves of form He maketh :  
When His great rapture this our body He shaketh,  
It and the mind leap up in ecstasy !  
In all our thoughts He dwells immersed,  
In all our joys and sorrows versed ;  
Endless is He, beginningless :  
Containing all things in perpetual Bliss !

*Ānanda rūpam amritam vibhāti*: Bliss incarnate and Immortal He shines! If this needs a commentary for the modern reader, it formed part of the outlook of a medieval poetess of India, who imbibed its meaning with her mother's milk and from the very air she breathed:

I salute the Life which is like a sprouting seed,  
With its one arm upraised in the air, and the other down  
in the soil ;  
The Life which is One in its outer form and its inner sap ;  
The Life that ever appears and yet eludes.  
I salute the Life that comes, and the Life that goes ;  
The Life that is revealed, and the Life that is hidden ;  
I salute the Life in suspense, standing like a mountain,  
And the Life of the surging sea of fire ;

The Life that is tender like a lotus, and hard like a  
thunder-bolt.

I salute the Life which is in the mind, with its one side  
in the dark, and the other in the light.

I salute the Life in the house, and the Life that is out in  
the open :

The Life full of joy, and the Life weary with its pains ;

The Life eternally moving, rocking the world into still-  
ness :

The Life deep and silent, breaking out into boisterous  
waves !

The dichotomy of ' form and formlessness ', as well as the jargon of ' realism ', must be set aside, if we are really to understand Indian Art and appreciate it. To those who look to the camera as a box of revelations, which alone is capable of being ' true to nature ', our productions are bound to appear ' grotesque '. But to be wedded to that kind of ' realism ' is to miss the real nature and purpose of art, no less than its peculiar technique. If our iconography—with its myriad arms and heads, its combination of animal with human forms and its several distortions of the ' natural and the real '—seems ' grotesque ', we shall have to condemn, by the same logic, the ' distortions ' of the facts of nature by our poets, writers of fairy-tales, and the creators of animal-fables, such as those of *Pancha-tantra* and Aesop. We shall have, in short, to run down Poetry itself as ' unnatural ', for we never ' lisp in numbers. ' ' Pictures, poetry, and every work of art, ' as Croce says, ' produce no effect save on souls prepared to receive them. ' In the logic of commonsense, *Dasarūpa*, an Indian work on Aesthetics, states that the spectator's appreciation of beauty depends on the effort of his own imagination, ' as in the case of children playing with clay elephants '. ( D. S. 33 ) And, in the words of

Rabindranath Tagore : ' In our country, those of the audience who are appreciative, are content to perfect the song in their own mind by the force of their own feeling. ' Indeed, there is a part of the ' melody unheard ' which is sweeter to the listener because of his own qualities. According to Shukracharya, ' The defects of images are constantly destroyed by the power of the virtue of the worshipper ' ; or, as Dhananjaya puts it, ' The permanent motif becomes *rasa* through the *rasika*'s own capacity for being delighted '. The appreciation of Beauty, consequently, is a product of the onlookers' ability to enter into the Artist's experience and vision. Judged by these canons, Indian Art will at once acquire a new meaning and uniqueness.

We have stated earlier, that Philosophy, as an abstraction, unrelated to life as it is actually lived, has no meaning for us in India. Likewise, Art which is not one with life's aspirations and inner urges, is no art at all, for the Indian. That is why much or most of our art is religious art, and even God is not an abstraction with us. He is the reality that lives and manifests itself in and through the universe, with which the artist is *en rapport*. ' Religion and art are thus names, ' says Coomaraswamy, ' for one and the same experience — an intuition of reality and of identity. ' ( *ib.* 35-6 ) The artist is, therefore, asked to meditate on this, as Valmiki did before he created the *Rāmāyana*. ' The mind of the sage, ' says a Chinese artist, ' being in repose, becomes the mirror of the universe, the speculum of all creation. ' And Laurence Binyon writes : ' We too should make ourselves empty that the Great Soul of the Universe may fill us with its breath. ' ( *ib.* 22-3 )

It was precisely because of this unique outlook, and conception of Art, that it was not commercialized and vulgarized in India. The Artist was of the sacred lineage of Vishwakarma, the architect of the universe. In the creation of works of Beauty, he was expected to be True and Good also. According to one of our *Shilpa Shāstras*: ‘The *Shilpin* [artificer] should understand the *Atharva Veda*, the thirty-two *Shilpa Shāstras*, and the Vedic *mantras* by which the deities are invoked. He should be one who wears a sacred thread, a necklace of holy beads, and a ring of *kusha* grass on his finger; delighting in the worship of God, faithful to his wife, avoiding other women, piously acquiring knowledge of various sciences — such a one is indeed a craftsman.’ According to another: ‘The painter must be a good man, no sluggard, nor given to anger; holy, learned, self-controlled, devout and charitable—such should be his character.’ Finally, according to Mahatma Gandhi: ‘The man who comes nearest to perfection is the greatest Artist.’ ( M. MG, 37-9 )

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## CHAPTER V

### THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY

*'The great question is to discover, not what governments prescribed, but what they ought to prescribe.'*

ACTON

THE CHARACTER of a people is well brought out in the imagery they are capable of conceiving. For that imagery is the product of their most spontaneous mental processes in the least sophisticated moments. Like the reflections of the clouds of heaven, in all their beautiful shapes and colours, mirrored on the placid surface of lakes, they pass through the race-mind during its creative moods of leisure, when it seems to indulge in the *Leelā* of the Creator himself, sporting with all sorts of forms for the mere joy of creation. To this category belong the various specimens of Indian iconography and sculpture, to which we have alluded before—like those of Ganapati, Nrisimha, Ardhanarishvara, Dattatreya, and so on. Two of the most magnificent illustrations of these are, however, to be found in the realm of literature: they are the *Virāt-Purusha* of the *Vedas* and the *Vishva-rūpa-Darshana* of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. But it is to be remembered that these were the creations of the same race-mind that could think of the stupendous colossi and the marvellous excavations of the Kailas temple of Ellora. It was the same mind, too, which conceived of *Vasudhaiva-kutumbakam* or the World as One Family:

So did Pāndu's son behold  
All this Universe enfold  
All its huge diversity

Into One Vast Shape, and be  
 Visible and viewed and blended  
 In One Body — subtle, splendid,  
 Nameless — the all-comprehending  
 God of gods, the never-ending !

Such too is the *Virāt-Purusha* of the Vedic seers : an anticipation, or personification, of the fourfold organization of Aryan society, as we find it in historical times—*Brāhmanasya mukham āsīd bāhū rājanyah kritah, urū tad asya yud vaishyo padbhyām śūdro ajāyata*. 'The Brahman was His mouth, the Rajanya was His arms, the Vaishya His thighs, and the Shudra His feet.' But this is only the social part of the personification ; it has also a universal and cosmic background, without which its significance will be missed. This Purusha is *sahasra-shīrsha*, *sahasrāksha*, and *sahasrapād* : he has a thousand heads, thousand eyes and thousand legs. Obviously, 'thousand' here implies innumerable. The *sūkta* goes on to say : 'The moon was born from his mind, the sun from his eye ; Indra and Agni from his mouth ; from his breath was born the wind. From his navel came the air, from his head sprang the sky, from his feet the earth, from his ears the regions : thus were the worlds formed.' The Purusha 'covered the earth in all directions,' and extended 'ten fingers beyond'—*atyatishṭhat dashāṅgulam* : 'Purusha is this whole Universe, whatever has been, whatever shall be, and a possessor of Immortality, which groweth great on sacrificial food... and becometh that which eateth and that which eateth not. So great is Purusha, yea, and greater still.' This is as far as human speech could go ; for the rest, in the language of the *Upanishad* : 'The eye does not go thither, nor speech, nor mind. We do not know, we do not understand how any one can reach it.'



Underlying this vast conception is also the idea of 'sacrifice,' which is all-devouring in our psychology, even as the idea of *Dharma* is all-pervading in our society. 'When the gods prepared the sacrifice, with Purusha as the offering, the Spring was the sacrificial butter, the Summer was the fuel, and Autumn was the accompanying oblation, . . . When the sacrifice was completed, they collected the fat dripping from it : it formed the creatures of the air, and the animals that live in the forest, and those that live in the villages. . . . From this sacrifice, when completed, were born the *Rig*-hymns, and the *Sāma*-hymns, and the incantations of the *Atharvan* ; and the *Yajus* was also born from it. From it were born the horses, and all the cattle that have two rows of teeth ; the kine were born from it : from it the goats and sheep were born.' It also adds : 'So the gods, through sacrifice, earned the right to sacrifice ; these were the First Ordinances.'

This is indeed a unique product of the human imagination ; it is typically Indian, and essentially *human*, because of its very personification. It is universal and cosmic, and is, at the same time, integrated with the idea of Sacrifice. These are the predominating characteristics of ancient Indian society. We shall dwell on it here in order to understand the basic principles underlying it, rather than in the spirit of advocacy. Human institutions arise out of human needs ; they must change with changing circumstances. It is not to be forgotten that Life creates institutions for its own purposes ; institutions can only foster that life, not produce it. The moment they outlive their utility, they must be transformed, but not necessarily destroyed or discarded. They are not to be allowed to smother life, like the proverbial 'chinese shoe' which arrested the growth of the mar-



ching feet; they must be reshaped to serve the new needs.

Indian society is like the mighty elephant, carrying its massive weight on its four pillar-like legs. It is a living organism, and not an elephant sculptured in stone. Its legs are, therefore, more vital than the pillars supporting a huge architectural monument. They are very much alive and moving. Their harmony of co-operation, in bearing the whole weight of the entire living organism, contributes, every moment, to the lordly equipoise of the mighty creature, which is so gentle, in spite of its great strength and size. Their equilibrium is not disturbed by thoughts of status, emanating from their respective positions: the hind-legs are not inferior to the forelegs; if there is any difference at all, they contribute more to the pulling-strength of the elephant. When the front or the hind-legs are raised above the others, even temporarily, as in a circus, they upset the equilibrium by that unnatural action. Such really was the organization of Hindu society, under the scheme of *Varnāshrama*, with its four *Purushārthas* of *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Moksha*.

These, along with the joint-family and the village-communities, were the pillars of strength, which gave stability to our civilization in the past. We shall deal with the last in the next chapter. These corporations, like all our social institutions, were built on the principle of co-operation, not competition. Although they had all the characteristics of a political system, they worked essentially in the spirit of mutual understanding and fellow-feeling which are natural to a family. The joint-family was the prototype of a society which functioned on the basis of 'from each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs'. The under-

lying sense of equality was organic, not political ; it was the functional equality of the fore-legs and the hind-legs of the elephant. They together pulled the social weight, though the several members were individually of unequal capacity. As in the parable of the human body and its various parts or limbs, the legs moved, the hands worked, the mouth ate, and the brain thought out plans, but all received their due share of nourishment—none being starved or neglected. The four sections of Aryan society—*Brāhmaṇa*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaiśhya*, and *Shūdra*—were co-ordinated and integrated on this very principle.

*Varna* (lit. colour), as is well known, was the mark of distinction between the fair-skinned Aryan immigrant and the dark-complexioned Dasa of the country. When the *rapprochement* between the two was effected, that term came to be applied—still as a mark of distinction, without reference to colour—to all the fresh divisions of society. These divisions were made, in the language of the *Gītā*, according to *guna* and *karma*, i. e. character and function ; they had no reference to race or heredity. Each member was expected to take his place in the social hierarchy, according to his capacity or social worth. This was largely determined by his *svabhāva* or inherent inclination. A man would and could move up or down the ladder. When such changes were effected, no stigma was attached to the person who translated himself from one state into another ; he got assimilated beyond recognition. The case of Parashu Rama, a Brahman, becoming a Kshatriya by vocation, and Vishvamitra, a Kshatriya, similarly becoming a *Brahmarshi* by dint of *tapas*, are well known. Valmiki, a hunter, likewise becomes a *rishi* ; and Satyakama Jabala was admitted to the study of *Brahma-Vidyā*, in spite of his nondescript parentage. In historical

times, too, we have authentic instances of a Chandra-gupta Maurya becoming a monarch by merit, although he was the son of Muradevi, a *Shūdra* woman. His celebrated minister, Chanakya or Vishnugupta, was a Brahman who became an adept in statecraft. But the classic instance is that of the Brahman Dronacharya, teaching *Dhanurvedyā* or archery to the Pandavas who were Kshatriyas. We have previously come across Fa Hian's reference to the Brahman Manjushri who lived in Nalanda monastery, and was equally respected by the Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhists. But this elasticity, unfortunately, did not endure long enough. How and by what stages the deterioration came about is not our present concern ; that it did come about, we know from the state of our society. Rigidity is a mark of decreased vitality, and an enemy of natural growth. But even an iron cage can, and does, afford protection sometimes. This function, the historical Caste-system discharged at a time when political anarchy was rampant. Then, Caste-organization and the Village-Communities proved our only saviours. Yet, today, they are counterfeits and not the genuine coin. Could we but melt them and re-mint them for ' the commerce of our times ', the ' metal ' is certainly worth saving.

Let us at least note what the original ' gold-mohur ' was like, if only to avoid shaping our new ' currency ' after borrowed patterns. Says the *Mahābhārata*, in the famous dialogue between Yudhishtira and the Yaksha : ' A man does not become a Brahman by the mere fact of his birth, nor even by the acquisition of Vedic scholarship ; it is good character alone that can make one a Brahman. He will be worse than a Shudra if his conduct is not in conformity with the rules of good behaviour. ' The qualities of a Brahman, ' springing from his own

nature', according to the *Bhagavad Gītā*, are 'serenity, self-control, austerity, purity, forgiveness, uprightness and knowledge.' Those of a Kshatriya are 'valour, energy, firmness, resourcefulness, dauntlessness in battle, generosity and majesty'. The duties expected of a Vaishya are, 'attention to agriculture, rearing of cattle and trade'; while the duty of a Shudra is stated simply as 'service'. (xviii. 42-44) Manu sums up their relative status and functions in society in the following verse :

*Viprānām jñānato jyaishṭhyam,  
Kshatriyānām tu vīryatah,  
Vaishyānām dhānya-dhanatah,  
Shūdrānām eva janmatah.*

'The Brahman acquires his status by his knowledge ; the Kshatriya by his martial vigour ; the Vaishya by wealth ; and the Shudra by birth alone.' (ii.155)

Each one has his place and function determined 'by his own nature', and by following this alone does one fulfil himself best : *Své své karmanyabhiratah samsiddhim labhaté narah*, declares the *Gītā*. Further, 'One ought not to give up work which is suited to one's own nature, though it may have its imperfections ; for all human endeavours are beset with limitations, even as fire is enveloped by smoke'. (ib. 49) 'I follow my *Dharma*', says Yudhishtira, even in his exile, 'not because I see immediate profit in it, but because virtue is to be practised, for its own sake, under all circumstances.' May we not, therefore, pray with Wordsworth :

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God !  
There be who ask not if thine eye  
Be on them ; who, in love and truth :  
Where no misgiving is, rely  
Upon the genial sense of youth :  
Glad hearts ! without reproach or blot,  
Who do thy work, and know it not :

O ! if through confidence misplaced  
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power ! around them cast.

In India, however, this ' Stern Daughter of the Voice of God ' was never regarded as a ' dread Power. ' The Categorical Imperative was felt and acted upon in the spirit of Love's sacrifice. For the Indian, there is but one constant purpose in life ; it is to live up to his DHARMA. He does not even regard it with the sense of external compulsion suggested by ' the Great Task-Master's eye '. For *Dharma* is the very Law of his existence. It is an untranslatable word ; *dhāryatē anena iti dharmah*—' that which sustains is *Dharma* '. The integrity of the individual, not less than that of society is maintained by this ' spiritual cement '. As *Rita*, according to A. B. Keith, ' It applies to all aspects of the world, to the sequence of events in nature, to the sacrifice and to man's life. ' (R. P. V. 249)

Since the task of the Brahman was to help all other sections of Aryan society, to understand its nature and implications, as well as to lead them to its constant observance, his lot was considered by Megasthenes to be ' the hardest '. Hence, he observes, ' *It is permitted that the Sophist be from any caste*, for the life of the Sophist is not an easy one, but the hardest of all. They are not as numerous as the others, but they hold the supreme place in dignity and honour. ' (M. C. 218) It is interesting to note the Greek ambassador's observations on all sections of Indian Society, in the time of Chandra-gupta Maurya. Particularly about the royal informers, he states ; ' It is against their use and wont to give a false report ; indeed, no Indian is accused of lying. ' We have also seen, already, the repeated references of successive generations of foreign travellers in India to the high moral standards of the people of this country.

This has been entirely due to the pervasive influence of the power of DHARMA. Apart from the *sva-dharma* of each individual and caste, there was also the *sādhāraṇa-dharma* enjoined upon every one. It comprized mainly : i. *Ahimsā* or non-injury to life ; ii. *Satya* or truthfulness ; iii. *Asteya* or *Aparigraha*—non-stealing or non-appropriation of other people's wealth ; iv. *Brahmacharya* or chastity (control of senses) ; and v. *Shaucha* or cleanliness. There were also, of course, other duties such as hospitality to strangers, *bhūta-dayā*, etc. which have been alluded to before.

As Pericles spoke of the Athenians, and Socrates of the Spartans, there was only one Sovereign Master, and that was Law : In India it was DHARMA. Just as there was a *Dharma* ruling the conduct of the Brahmans, there was also a *Rāja-dharma* laying down the standards for Kings. The *Mahābhārata* states that it is the duty of the Kshatriyas 'to fight valiantly and die for the cause of righteousness. The King must govern according to the strict rules of equity ; he must look upon his subjects as his own children ; he must be active, and a lover of truth ; he must temper justice with mercy ; he must be liberal-minded, and a patron of learning.' (*Anuśāsana*)

Kautilya, who holds similar views, also indirectly adds that 'it is not advisable to live in a country where the following do not exist : i. Respectful and hospitable treatment ; ii. Means of making a decent living ; iii. Friends or relations ; iv. Means of acquiring knowledge ; v. Rich men who are generous ; vi. Wise men ; vii. Good water ; viii. Competent doctors ; and, finally, ix. Settled Government.' (*Artha-śāstra*, i. 8-9) In other words, the duty or *Dharma* of a King is to make the Good Life possible. In short, such kings provided the very



basic foundations of civilized existence ; they were the staunchest Pillars of Society.

The stipulation of the *Mahābhārata*, that the subjects must be loyal to their King and Government, and that they should be prepared to die for them (H. E. 62 ) must be understood to apply only to ideal monarchs as described above. This made loyalty a relative obligation. Even though kingship may not have been strictly elective, it was subject not merely to the law of *Dharma*, but also to the condition of being acceptable to the subjects. Of this democratic principle we have fairly numerous illustrations. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, we find Dasharatha convening an Assembly, in order to obtain popular confirmation of his nomination of Shri Ramachandra as his successor on the throne. He asks his subjects not to accept it as a royal decree but judge in the interests of the welfare of the people. ( C. L. 108 ) In the *Mahābhārata*, too, we observe Yayati assigning reasons for the supersession of his elder son by the younger Puru, to meet the objections raised by his subjects ; it is only after satisfying them that the consecration takes place. ( ib. 111 )

As historical examples of this democratic practice, we might cite the evidence of a few authentic cases. An inscription at Girnar, dated 150 A. D., speaks of Rudradaman's 'election by all the castes for their protection.' ( E. I. vii. 43-47 ) Another epigraph, at Khalimpur, refers to a similar election : that of Gopal ( founder of the Pala dynasty ) as king 'in order to get rid of the prevailing anarchy'. ( ib. iv. 248 ) The duties of a king are thus defined in the *Artha-śāstra* of Kautilya : ' The king should find his religion in promptness of action ; the discharge of his duties is a religious sacrifice, and readiness to attend to all alike is his consecration : In the

happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare ; not his own pleasure, but their's, shall he consider. Ever active shall he be in the discharge of his duties : for in activity lies the root of well-being.' (i. 13) How this prescription was literally followed by Asoka is evidenced by his edicts. He declares in one of them : 'In all places and at all times, I am approachable by the people ; let them realize that the king is their father, feeling for them as for himself, and that they are to him as his own children.' We shall read more about Asoka in a subsequent chapter. Here we shall review a few other instances of kings who tried to live up to the highest traditions of monarchy in this country.

The last Hindu example, before the advent of Islam, was that of Sri Harsha of Kanauj, who was himself a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad. Hiuen Tsang, the great Chinese pilgrim, as we have noticed before, was at the court of Harsha for eight years. His account, therefore, may be trusted as an authentic picture of the times he has so vividly described. 'The people, having lost their ruler,' he says, 'the country became desolate (after the death of Rajyavardhana). Then the great minister, Po-ni, whose power and reputation were high and of much weight, addressed the assembled ministers saying :

" The destiny of the nation is to be fixed today. The old king's son is also no more. The brother of the prince, however, is humane and affectionate, and his heaven-conferred disposition is dutiful and obedient. Because he is strongly attached to his family, the people will trust him. I propose that he assumes the royal authority. Let each one give his opinion on this matter, whatever it is, just as he thinks".



The ministers declared in favour of Harsha. Addressing him, they said : "The opinion of the people, as shown in their songs, proves their submission to your eminent qualities. Reign, therefore, with glory over the land...We pray you, reject not our prayer". The prince replied : "The Government of a country is a responsible office, and ever attended with difficulties. The duties of a prince require great deliberation. As for myself, I am of small eminence. But as my father and brother are no more, to reject the heritage of the crown can bring no benefit to the people. I must, therefore, attend to the opinion of the world and forget my own insufficiency." ( B. R. )

How Harsha acquitted himself may be gathered from the further report of the same observer : Assuming the royal office, he called himself the king's son—' Kumara ' ; his title was ' Siladitya '. He practised to the utmost the rules of temperance, and sought to plant the tree of religious merit, to such an extent, that he forgot to sleep or eat. He forbade the slaughter of any living thing, or flesh as food, throughout the Five Indies, on pain of death without pardon. He built on the banks of the river Ganges several *stūpas*, each about 100 feet high ; in all the highways of the towns and villages, throughout India, he erected *punya-shālās* or rest-houses, provided with food and drink, and stationed there physicians with medicines for travellers and the poor people round about, to be given without any stint. On all spots where there were any holy traces of the Buddha, he raised *sanghārāmas*.

'Once in every five years, he held a great assembly called *Moksha*. Then he emptied the whole treasury and gave all away in charity. The four kinds of alms—food, drink, medicine and clothes. He ordered the priests to carry on

discussions, and himself judged of their several arguments, whether they were weak or powerful. If there was any irregularity in the manners of the people, he went amongst them [to set them right]. He lightened their burdens and mitigated punishments. The country abounded in resources, and the people enjoyed complete rest. It would be difficult to recount all the great changes he accomplished. '

Even after the advent of Islam in this country, the old idealism did not die out. On the contrary, the transformation brought about by the impact of foreigners, with a different outlook and traditions, whetted the appetite of the Hindus for the conservation of whatever was best in their own civilization. This accounts for the many revivalist movements of medieval India, resulting in the synthesis between the old and the new which we have noticed earlier in this book. What Kabir and Nanak effected in the field of religion and society, that Akbar, and others like him, attempted to bring about with the full authority of the State wielded by them. To cite only two outstanding illustrations, Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagara, and Shivaji in Maharashtra, were not mere empire-builders, but idealists like Asoka and Akbar; they sought, to use Abul Fazl's phrase, 'to reform the manners of the people' entrusted to their care. That is why their memories are enshrined in the hearts of our people, even to this day. They were among the shining pillars of Indian society in the past.

'*Rājā kālasya kāraṇam*' declares a familiar Indian saying; 'the King is the cause of the times'. How largely true! "The ideal of Vishnu, the Preserver and King of the Universe," writes E. B. Havell, "has its primitive roots in the ideal Aryan temporal ruler and spiritual leader, who protected his people with his strong arm,

upheld the Aryan law of righteousness, and maintained liberties of the Aryan free men." (A. R. I. ix) So long as this ideal was followed by kings, they were surrounded with a divine halo in popular sentiment, which regarded the king as a veritable god; *Rājā pratyaksha-devatā*. But when there was neither good nor strong government in the country; when, in fact, the only ruler was 'anarchy', then the people had to take care of themselves as best they could. This task was better done in India than in most other countries (as evidenced by the survival of our culture and civilization through all such periods of political disruption) thanks to the institutions, whose importance and value we have tried briefly to assess in the course of this chapter. But there was, in all this, a Central Pillar of Society, as vital as it was unobtrusive—like the 'master motif' in a work of art; and that was WOMAN.

It is not possible to do justice to the vital role of woman in the history of our civilization by a cursory reference in the course of an epilogue to a chapter. It must take a whole volume to itself. Most of our history appears man-made, no doubt, but it is not to be forgotten that woman is represented in our philosophy as *S'akti*; she is the energizing principal. But she appears in the dual role of Creator as well as Destroyer. Her power for good and evil cannot be exaggerated. Yet, it may be said, without fear of contradiction, that *wars are made by men, and homes are made by women*. Indian culture is made as much by woman as by man. Her contribution to its conservation, all through our history, has been even greater. That is why, in this country, Mother and the Motherland have been regarded as worthier of adoration than Heaven itself: *Jananī Janma Bhūmiścha svargādapi garīyasī*. According to Manu,

‘Where women are honoured, the gods rejoice; where they are not respected, all actions become futile.’ (iii. 56) ‘Where husband and wife are in reciprocal harmony, the household remains ever prosperous.’ (ib. 60) If, in other verses, Manu appears to deny complete freedom to woman, because of her dependence on father, husband, or son, in the different stages of her life, he is also careful to add: ‘He who strives to protect woman thereby preserves himself, family, character and *Dharma*.’ (ix. 7) In the *Vedas*, she is invited into the family ‘as a river enters the sea’ and ‘to rule there along with her husband, as a queen, over the other members of the family.’ (A. V. xiv. i. 43-44) *Yathā sindhur-nadīnām sāmrajyam sushuve vṛshā, evā tvam samrajñyedhi patyurastam paretya; samrajñyedhi śvaśureshu samrajñyuta devṛshu, nanānduh samrajñyedhi samrajñyuta śvaśrvāh.*

Sanskrit literature is permeated with the aroma of this regard for women, and its firmament is studded with galaxies of ‘gems of purest ray serene’ like Sita, Savitri, and Shakuntala. These have not only inspired poets to sing their glory, but also stimulated ordinary folk to emulate their examples. In the intellectual sphere, the wife of Mandanmishra, who presided over the famous debate between him and Shankaracharya, on so abstruse and subtle a subject as *Vedānta*, had her prototypes in Maitreyi and Gargi of the Vedic age. In the active field of politics, we come across queens like Rudramba of Warangal (13th cent. A. D.) whom Marco Polo so much admired, Ahilyadevi Holkar of Indore (18th cent.) and Lakshmibai of Jhansi (19th cent.), for whom every Indian is so full of admiration and pride even today. They had their parallels among the Muslim rulers in Sultana Razia, Chandbibbi and Nur Jahan; while in the Taj Mahal we have the noblest monument eve

erected by man to commemorate the chastity of a faithful wife. That 'dream in marble' has continued to exercise its magic spell, not only over Indians—Hindus and Muslims — but equally over all other people who have any appreciation for art. Less prominent in the pages of history, but not less powerful in her sway over the heart of another great contemporary of Mum Taj and Shah Jahan, was Jijabai, the mother of Shivaji. It is difficult to say who exercised a greater influence over the mind and character of the noble and heroic Shivaji—Jijabai or Tulja Bhavani; perhaps the former was the goddess made flesh; at any rate so she was in the eyes of her son. Napoleon was not more indebted to his mother.

Modern India is living up to this tradition which is being kept alive by a galaxy of noble women. To pick out illustrations might appear invidious. But they are all inspired by the memories of those whom we have mentioned above and yet others; of the patriotic women (mentioned by Ferishta) who provided the sinews of war in the 11th century by melting their jewels for the defence of India; of the heroic women of the Deccan (mentioned by Isami) 'who fought like tigresses' against the invading army of Allauddin Khalji, in the 13th century; and of the noble Padmini of Chitor, and her companions, who laid down their lives at the altar of chastity; as well as the stream of women-saints of mediæval India like Mirabai, Sakhubai, Janabai and Kanhopatra, who rose from all ranks, from princesses to maid-servants. "Let us go back," they seem to say, "to the *Vedas*, to the days of women's equality with men, in religion, in marriage, in the right to hold property and to serve the State." (M. I. W. 445)

Are we not thine, O Beloved, to inherit  
The manifold pride and power of thy Spirit?

Ne'er shall we fail thee, forsake thee or falter,  
 Whose hearts are thy home, and thy shield and thy  
 altar !

SAROJINI NAIDU

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## CHAPTER VI

### PROTOTYPES OF DEMOCRACY

*Yudhishtira said : ' I wish to hear, O most Enlightened One, the course of conduct of the Ganas — how they prosper, and are not torn by dissensions, conquer enemies and acquire allies. '*

SANTI PARVA

IN the preceding chapter we have described and discussed some of the social factors and institutions that imparted strength and stability to our civilization in the past. 'Institutions,' says Hilaire Belloc, 'rise from a certain spirit inhabiting society, a spirit of which they are the product ; and they are maintained by men's acceptance of that spirit.' We have observed that, in Indian Society, that spirit is the spirit of the Family with its sense of spontaneous harmony and fellow-feeling. It is the spirit of the joint-family, a spirit of mutual sympathy and co-operation, emphasizing Duty more than rights, obligation more than privilege, which contributed to its successful working through the centuries. Indian Democracy, evidences of which we shall examine in the course of this chapter, also functioned in the same spirit of brotherhood and community of interests, without feeling the need for defining 'equality' as our modern world has done.

Monarchy, no doubt, was the prevailing form which government took in India, as everywhere else, during the greater part of history. But even this, at its best, was informed with such a high sense of public obligation, that it provided the proper setting for other institutions, essentially democratic in their nature, to exist and func-



tion without conflict with the sovereign at the centre. As a matter of fact, there was so much of decentralization, in practice, that even the succession of monarchs of different characters did not interrupt the smooth working of local administrations, which were really carried on for centuries without reference to the king at the centre. Even though the king was, ordinarily, concerned mainly with the collection of revenue, and did not interfere in local affairs, *S'ukraniti* states that 'the king should personally inspect every year the villages, towns, and provinces, and must know which subjects have been pleased, and which oppressed, by the staff officers, and deliberate upon matters brought forward by the people. He should take the side, not of his officers, but of his subjects.' (i. 751-2) According to Yajnavalkya, it was also the duty of the king 'to discipline and establish again on the path of *Dharma* all who erred from their own laws—whether families, estates, guilds or associations.' Manu, likewise, states that 'a king who knows the sacred Law should enquire into the laws of castes, districts, guilds and families,' etc. (L. I. x. 155)

Besides the monarchical, there were also aristocratic and democratic States in ancient India. Megasthenes refers to the magistrates of self-governing States, to whom the government reporters were expected to communicate whatever was happening in the country, just as they did to the king, where there was one (Mc. 218). One such republic, that of the Sabarcae, possessed an army of 6,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry with 500 chariots, and they fought against Alexander the Great, in the 4th century B. C. Similarly, the State of the Nysa was an oligarchy, governed by a Council of 300 aristocrats; while another was democratic, with an Assembly



of 5,000 members. The Yaudheyas, the Malavas, and the Arjuneyas had democratic constitutions. Even a State with a dual-monarchy, like that of Sparta, is mentioned. (C. L. 269-83) But it is more interesting to study the working of the village-republics of which we have more definite and widespread evidence, in other parts of the country, during the more definitely historical period. It was about the survivals of these latter, in the early 19th century, that Sir Charles Metcalfe wrote in admiration: 'They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution; but the village-communities remain the same. This union of the village-communities, each one forming a separate little State in itself, has, I conceive, contributed, more than any other cause, to the preservation of the peoples of India, through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and is, in a high degree, conducive to their happiness and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence.' (R. H. C. 1832, iii, 331) Sir George Birdwood, similarly, remarked that, though India has undergone more religious and political revolutions than any other country in the world, these village-communities have stood like a rock in the midst of the rising and the falling tide, 'in full municipal vigour all over the peninsula'. (I. A. T. 320)

Professor A. S. Altekar, while he criticizes these generalizations as rather too sweeping, at the same time admits, that 'there are more points of resemblance than those of difference among the village-communities of the various parts of India.' (V. C. W. I. 122) Likewise, while he considers the term 'republic' misleading, because these village-communities were subject—in theory as well as practice—to the sovereignty of kings, he des-

cribes their essentially democratic character, even in Western India, where they were less formally organized than in South India. In Western India, he has pointed out, the Gota or Panchayat Council consisted of not only non-Brahmins but also of the untouchables. (ib. 124 ) In fact, as R. P. Masani has observed: 'Caste-riven though the population was, these groups may be likened to the fingers of one's hand, perpetually separated, yet perpetually co-operating.' He further explains how this socio-economic system worked on the basis of 'class-collaboration and the rule of law.' Under its influence, he says, 'the genius of the people for corporate action expressed itself in a variety of self-governing institutions, with highly developed constitutions, rules of procedure, and machinery of administration, which challenge comparison with modern parliamentary institutions. Reading the election-rules of these bodies, the division of villages and districts into electoral units, their rules of debate, and standing-orders for the conduct of business and maintenance of order in debate, and their committee-system—one might wonder whether many standing-orders of the House of Commons and of the London County Council are not derived from the regulations of the ancient local-bodies, ecclesiastical-councils, and village-assemblies of India!' (L. I. 152-3) The Marquess of Zetland has carried forward this line of speculation into greater detail. In his learned Introduction to *The Legacy of India* (O. U. P.) he writes:

And it may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the Assemblies of the Buddhists in India, 2,000 years and more ago, are to be found the rudiments of our Parliamentary practice of the present day. The dignity of the Assembly was preserved by the appointment of a special officer—the embryo of 'Mr. Speaker' in our House of Commons. A second officer was appointed whose duty it was to see

that, when necessary, a quorum was secured—the prototype of the Parliamentary ‘Chief Whip’ in our own system. A member initiating business did so in the form of a ‘motion’ which was then open for discussion. In some cases this was done once only, in others three times, thus anticipating the practice of Parliament in requiring that a Bill be read a third time before it becomes law. If discussion disclosed a difference of opinion, the matter was decided by a vote of the majority, the voting being by ballot. (x-xi)

To cite a few illustrations: The Buddha is reported as having told his great disciple Ananda that the Vajjians held full and frequent Assemblies, and so long as they continued this practice, ‘they may be expected not to decline but to prosper.’ The *Chullavagga* speaks of matters being referred to a Committee and the rules regarding resolutions to be moved before the Assembly. In case there was difference of opinion, the sense of the members was determined by the votes of the Majority. The *Mahāvagga* also lays down rules regarding the votes of the absentee members and quorum. Arrian provides the testimony of the Greeks about the prosperity of some of these democratically governed States, and says that they ‘exercised authority with moderation’. (Mc. 79-81, 121) Professor R. C. Majumdar refers to the ‘Ultra-democratic’ spirit of the Licchavis, amongst whom there was a hierarchy of seven successive tribunals, whose unanimity alone could secure the conviction of an accused person; even if one of them found the accused ‘not guilty’ he would escape. (C. L. 233) ‘When a cause has not been fully investigated by the meetings of the kindred,’ states Brihaspati, ‘it should be decided by the companies of artisans, after due deliberation; if it is not properly examined by them, then it should be taken up by the assemblies of co-citizens; and failing all, it should be finally disposed of by a special tribunal.’ (i. 28-30)

*Kula*, *S'reṇi*, *Gaṇa* or *Pūga*, represented the hierarchy of the various courts, according to the *Smṛtis*.

Coming to more historical times, we have interesting information from South Indian epigraphs. They refer to two sorts of village assemblies, the *Ur* and the *Sabhā*. There was also a third type, known as the *Nagaram*, which was confined to mercantile towns. Over these local-bodies was the larger representative assembly of the *Nādu* which covered a wider territorial division. They all worked in co-operation and harmony with the king's officers. If there was any dispute, which could not be settled by ordinary means, they referred it to a special tribunal or committee called the *Mulaparusai*. 'The appeal to the *mos majorum*,' writes Prof Nilkanta Sastri, the stress laid on the consent of the *Ur*, the protest against undue influence by the *mudaligal* (i. e. government officials) and the deterrent punishment laid down against attempts to capture the executive by improper methods, or to prolong the period of office beyond the proper term, are all features...that deserve to be noted.' (C. 291-92) These remarks refer to the rules laid down by one such tribunal in the reign of Rajaraja III (13th cent. A. D.), relating to the constitution of the executive of a village administration (*kuttam*): 'There was an immemorial practice that, when the executive of the village was chosen, those who had once served could serve again only in the fifth year thereafter; their sons only in the fourth year, and their brothers in the third—and this ancient practice was to be maintained. Only those who were not less than forty years of age were to be chosen: the *kuttam* should be chosen after obtaining the consent ('as our ancestors did') of the villagers assembled as the *Ur*; any persons who got in by fraud, with the support of the officials of

government, or in violation of these rules, would be deemed to be traitors to the village, all their properties being confiscated. The *kuttam* was to be chosen every time for one year; any person that stayed on longer, would also be considered *grāmadrohis*, and punished as above.'

The Committee was known as the *Vāriyam*. In one instance, the *Sabhā* or *Mahāsabhā* resolved not to hold the meetings of the executive at night, for purposes of local administration ( *grāma-kāryam* ), and for considering revenue affairs ( *kadamaik-kāryam* ), as nocturnal meetings resulted in inefficient work ( *upahati* ), an extra expenditure of oil for lamps.' ( ib. 289 ) ' When collecting the *Kadamai* and *Kudimai* ( general revenue ) dues of the village and the *Sabhā viniyogam* ( local cesses ), the members of the *kuttam* should collect only the legitimate dues ( *prāptam* ) and not anything in excess thereof; the *sabhā viniyogam* was not to be mixed up with the *kudimai*, but collected separately, and expended in accordance with written orders, separately communicated to the accountant; if the expenditure on any single item exceeded 2,000 *kāsus*, the written sanction of the *Mahāsabhā* had to be obtained before the expenditure was incurred; if any expenditure was incurred, otherwise than in accordance with these rules, or any excess-collection was made ( of taxes and dues ), a fine of five times the amount involved was to be collected, which together with the proceeds of penal assessment, on persons who had arrears of revenue ( they had to pay double the original assessment ) went into the coffers of the *sabhā*. Lastly, the accountant of the village and the officers of the *Vāriyam*, and the *kudumbu*, were to change annually and carry out the orders lawfully issued to them.' ( ib. 292-4 )

There were elaborate rules laid down in the *Vyavasthā* or Constitution of the Committees, their method of election, procedure and functions, as well as rules stating the qualifications and disqualifications of members. A very detailed account of this is found in the epigraphic records of Uttaramallur ( or Uttaramerur ), belonging to the 10th century A. D. An attempt is made therein to provide a fair representation, not only for the thirty *kudumbus* or wards of the village, but also for each of the twelve *series* of streets, into which they were divided. There was to be a meeting of all the residents of each ward at which the name of the person they wished to nominate was entered on a ticket. These tickets were then collected and put into packets, labelled according to the various wards. They were then all placed in a pot, which was fully displayed by the elders before the general assembly of the entire village. Then each packet was picked up by a young boy, and its contents were transferred to another vessel, and thoroughly shuffled. The boy then picked out one of the tickets and placed it on the outstretched palm of the *Madhyastha*. The name on the ticket was then read out, and scrutinized by the priests present in the inner hall of the temple, where the elections usually took place. Thirty persons thus chosen were finally declared elected. They were then distributed into several Standing Committees, such as the Annual Committee, the Garden Committee, the Tank Committee, the Gold Committee—according to age, experience and other qualifications laid down for each in the rules.

The qualifications for nomination by the primaries were : i. the candidate shall be a tax-payer on at least 5 acres of land owned by him ; ii. he shall be living in a house of his own on that land ; iii. he shall be above



35 and below 70 years of age ; iv. he shall be one knowing the *Mantra Brāhmaṇa* ; v. if he is deficient in the property qualification, he shall be proficient at least in one of the *Vedas* and one of its four *Bhāshyas* ; vi. he shall be conversant with business ; vii. he shall be virtuous, and his means of livelihood honest ; and viii. he shall not have served on any Committee during the three years preceding. The term of each Committee was only one year. The disqualifications are equally clearly stated : i. delinquent committee-members and their relatives (specifically named) ; ii. incorrigible sinners and their relations who were not guilty of theft, adultery, drinking or killing of Brahmans ; iii. outcasts, until they have performed expiatory rites, provided they were not convicted of serious moral lapses ; iv. a class of persons individually disqualified, but not their relatives.

It is specially interesting to note that, not only were rules framed for the invalidation of irregular voting, but every member was expected to vote according to the convictions honestly held by him ; if the contrary was discovered, then such voting would be discounted. An inscription of the 9th century A. D., from the Tinnevely district, also prescribes penalties for members who needlessly held up business at meetings, merely for the sake of obstruction. (No. 423 of 1906). Another, from Ninravur (No. 176 of 1930), of the reign of Parantaka I, emphasizes the importance of the *kudumbu* (ward) in the conduct of the business of the *sabhā* ; it lays down that each *kudumbu* shall be represented by two persons who had not taken part in the discussions before.

Of even greater interest than all that we have so far noticed, are the functions of these various popular bodies. They have been thus described by Professor Nilkanta Sastri, a very competent and cautious South

Indian scholar, with special reference to the Cholas thus :

‘Statistics are of modern origin, and it is no easy thing to venture on quantitative statements relating to a distant past; but the student of Cola institutions often wonders whether, for local well-being, the gifts of the rich did not mean more, in that period, than the taxes levied and collected from the residents of a locality by its Assembly. However that may be, the Assemblies were not slow to address themselves to the task of enriching local life by additions to its amenities, social and cultural. For one thing, they took good care to preserve the records of older charities, and to see that their terms were carried out by the parties concerned. Altered economic conditions sometimes led to a revision of the original terms, but a genuine effort was made, not to allow any of the numerous perpetual endowments to fall into desuetude. Most of these centred round the village temple which had grown by the time of the Colas to dominate every aspect of rural life all over the country. The assemblies often set apart (tax-free) land for the maintenance of persons who expounded, in the halls of the temples, the national epics of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*. Music and dancing, and theatrical representations of the popular tales and legends, formed part of the ordinary routine of the temple. *Nāṭakaśālās* were specially constructed for these purposes. There were recitations of service hymns in Tamil and in Sanskrit, in the course of daily worship in the temples, and the Assemblies sometimes gave shares from the common lands of the village for the maintenance of these services.

‘The rôle of the temple in the secular life of its neighbourhood can hardly be exaggerated,’ ‘and the temple and its affairs were among the chief preoccupations of the local Assemblies. The temple was the centre of all the institutions for popular culture and amusement. Schools of higher learning were attached to temples, and so were hospitals. In the foundation of



hospitals, and the maintenance of physicians attached to them, the Assemblies actively assisted and co-operated with the donor. They also aided any persons who desired to put up rest-houses ( *ambalam* ) and provide for the supply of drinking water in them. Agrarian rights, tenures, and irrigation of lands, were among the most important concerns of the Assemblies.' ( C. 308-10 )

Professor R. K. Mookerji has also pointed out how these Assemblies were not only local, but also organized into federations, both on a communal and a territorial basis. Thus the individual village or community was not a closed unit but formed part of a larger world. Some of them were communal, in the sense of being 'professional', like the various trade and merchant guilds, which we shall notice more fully in the next chapter. But the general Village Assemblies were representative of, and included members from, all castes or communities. Instances of co-operation, both among the communities, as well as among the villages, are by no means infrequent. An inscription of uncertain date, found at Mannarkoyil, in the Tinnevely district ( No. 400 of 1946 ), mentions the *Madhyastha*, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the goldsmith, and the village pariah, as persons on whom representatives of the central government depended for the demarcation of the boundaries of a village. Not only were the Assemblies of the *Nādu* made up of representatives of the *sabhās* of villages and towns, but, sometimes, village-*sabhās* voluntarily coalesced to form a permanent union. ( S. I. I. ii. p. 320. ) Instances are not wanting of a number of such assemblies of the *Nādus* co-operating for common purposes. ( e. g. No. 103 of 1921 )

We shall complete this brief survey of our ancient democracies with a reference to their survivals in more

recent times. As Sir Henry Maine said, these village-communities of India are 'the least destructible institutions of a society which never willingly surrenders any one of its usages to innovation'. (A. L. 261) Lord Lawrence likewise observed: 'Among all castes, their love for the soil, and veneration for everything connected with the village, is remarkable. . . . Let any attack be made upon the village, let a claim be preferred to a single acre of the most barren and unproductive of its lands, and everyone is up in arms, ready to risk his life or spend his fortune in preserving those possessions inviolate.' (L. L. L., i, 100) Such is their abiding sense of cohesion even when everything has conspired to undermine their ancient foundations.

Two types of village organizations are to be seen in modern India: i. the Joint-villages of the N.-W. Frontier Province, the Punjab, and U. P. (in the last called *Pattidāri*); and ii. the *Ryotwāri* of other parts—particularly in the South. The former type is called *joint* because the village lands constitute the joint property of an organized proprietary Brotherhood, the members of which are ordinarily grouped in divisions and sub-divisions each in possession of separate shares of the cultivable area, corresponding more or less with shares determined by the rules of inheritance and partition under the joint-family system. The shares are owned, not separately by individuals, but by families. While the cultivable area is so divided, the inhabited site and the waste and pasture lands remain undivided, and constitute the joint-property of the entire Brotherhood. This association is more than a combination of coparceners. It is also, so to speak, a corporation organized for the management of all the affairs of the village, including the payment of the land-revenue. The usual practice is for the business of the

village to be transacted through a *Pañchāyat* or representative Council. Under the Zamindari system—which is only a variation of the above—the village lands are held and managed in common, and not divided. The tenants, if any, are the tenants of the whole body of proprietors ; their rents and their receipts are paid into a common fund, from which common expenses are met, and the annual profits are divided amongst the co-sharers according to their respective shares. ( I. S. H. 103-4 ) The common expenses include charity, entertainments, and cost of maintaining guests, strangers, etc.

The *Pañchāyats* continue to function even where the Headmen are now externally appointed, both in the Ryotwari and in the Joint-village. Baden-Powell has pointed out that these ‘committees of elders’ exist in every village, in the North, as well as, in the South, independently of what the village constitution is. They not only settle disputes, but also discuss and decide all matters of common concern to the villagers, such as the allotment of facilities for irrigation to different villagers, and the management and audit of the village fund. In the words of H. R. Pate : ‘The small communities which inhabit the villages [ in India ] possess in themselves almost all the elements which should go to form a strong corporate spirit.’ ( T. D. G. 103 )

*Vāpī-kūpa tadāgāni devatāyatanāni cha  
patitānyuddharet yastu, sa putraphalam ashnuté.*

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was *Vasudhaiva-kutumbakam*, and its idealistic periphery, the universe. DHARMA, as we have already noted, was the atmosphere which surrounded all, and bound every one to a common purpose. We have illustrated the manifestations of this outlook, in society and politics, in the preceding two chapters. Here we shall witness its applications to commerce and culture.

The *Dharma* of the Vaishya was to find *Mokṣa* through *Artha*. This implied the pursuit of wealth, not for its own sake, but for the prosperity of the community. Hence, we find that merchants organized themselves into guilds and corporations, from the earliest times, and devoted their earnings, not merely to personal enjoyment, but also to the well-being of the people around them. This was secured through endowments to temples, whose social importance we have noted already. We find ample evidence of the creation of these social utilities and their maintenance by individual donors, as well as corporations of traders, by their setting apart a good portion of their income for *dharmā-dāya*. There were at least twenty-seven diverse trades in the country which had organized themselves into guilds, among whom—strange to say—we find ‘robbers and free-booters’. The list in any case is illuminating. It comprised; i. wood-workers, ii. metal-workers, iii. stone-workers, iv. leather-workers, v. ivory-workers, vi. bamboo-workers, vii. rush-workers and basket-weavers, viii. mechanics, ix. braziers, x. jewellers, xi. potters, xii. cloth-weavers, xiii. oil-pressers, xiv. corn-dealers, xv. cultivators, xvi. butchers, xvii. fishermen, xviii. barbers, xix. florists and garland-makers, xx. dyers, xxi. painters, xxii. mariners. xxiii. forest-guards, xxiv. herdsmen, xxv. caravans of traders, and xxvi. robbers and free-booters !

It is obvious that, when even the robbers and freebooters were organized into guilds, honest men of business had not only to combine for their own trade-purposes, but also in order to protect themselves. Here self-help was more important and reliable than the precarious assistance from government, whether local or central. Kautilya, thus, speaks of Kshatriyas who formed themselves into armed companies, for war as well as trade. (A. S. 376) Shreni-dharma, according to Gautama, included the right to levy fines from offenders, as well as to imprison or expel them from the country (with the connivance or aid of the political authorities, obviously). (viii. 219-20) There are references in the inscriptions to charters being granted to corporations of traders, giving them not only trade concessions, but also a large amount of autonomy in the administrative and judicial spheres. This would, of course, depend upon the importance and status of these bodies; but we have evidence of their growing strength and prosperity. Through conferences and congregations the merchants built up their power and influence.

An inscription at Basinikonda, in the Chitoor district (No. 342 of 1912), refers to a congregation of 1500 merchants at Siravalli to which representatives of all castes and sects come from various places. Another epigraph (No. 256 of 1921) likewise, speaks of a meeting of 1,000 merchants, hailing from 18 towns, granting exemptions from communal contributions to the inhabitants of Kuttur. They also forbade merchants demanding, with drawn swords, taxes and tolls from the residents, on pain of excommunication. The most celebrated of such merchant corporations were, however, the *Maṇigrāmam* of Kodumbalur, the *Valanjiyar* of Tirruppurambiyam, and the *Nānādesis mandala of settis*

belonging to numerous *Nāḍus*. We have no space to describe all their activities, but they included the organization of production and distribution of articles of commerce, banking, regulation of the conduct of their members, securing rights and concessions from the State, and founding, as well as managing, charitable endowments. To cite only one instance of this last activity: about 1207 A. D. the merchant communities of Nellur, Pundamali, etc. co-operated in acquiring a whole village and giving it as *devadāna* to the temple of Tiruppasur, and left its management to one Tammu Siddhi. ( No. 120 of 1930 ) This will illustrate how the trade-guilds discharged their social obligations, apart from engaging in their professional activities.

It is important to note that they carried out these activities both inside and outside India. An inscription at Baligami, in Mysore, speaks of the merchants as ' brave men born to wander over many countries, since the beginning of the *Kṛita-Yuga*, and penetrating regions of the six continents, by land and water routes, and dealing in various articles, such as horses and elephants, precious-stones, perfumes and drugs, either wholesale or retail.' ( E. C. vii, Sk. 118 ) An illustration of the cultural proclivities of the Indian merchants outside India is provided by the Vishnu temple built by the Nanadesis at Pagan, in Burma, in the 13th century, and gifts made to it — according to an inscription — by a merchant from Malabar. ( E. I., vii., pp. 197-98 ) Hindu sculptures of decidedly South Indian origin have been discovered in a Chinese temple in the port town of Ch'uan-chou, opposite Formosa; these sculptures represent Pauranic themes like the Gajendra-moksha and Krishna tied to a mortar between trees, and so on, and are placed in the 12th or 13th century. ( C. 440 ) Professor Nilkanta Sastri



thinks it possible that a colony of South Indian merchants had settled in that place. This appears plausible from what we know of the nature of India's contacts and relations with China, Japan, and the Pacific world in the East, and Persia, Arabia and the Mediterranean in the West. Abu Zaid refers to Indian merchants at Shiraz (on the eastern coast of the Persian Gulf), who were invited to a repast, along with others, by one of the principal merchants of the place — at which, however, they were served on separate plates — each for every individual exclusively — out of respect for their national custom. ( ib. 434 )

This vast intercourse with the external world, during more than a thousand years, cannot be satisfactorily described here in a few pages. We have cited a few illustrations, to indicate its nature and scope. In general, it may be stated, at the outset, that it prospered mainly on account of the freedom of enterprise which Indian merchants enjoyed at the hands of their own rulers, and also on account of the encouraging patronage extended to foreign merchants in India. For instance, epigraphs at Mottupalli ( Nos. 600-1 of 1909 ) deal with charters granted to seamen's guilds ' for the protection of our subjects, remitting taxes on merchants trading by sea, in order to secure fame, and to maintain the principles of a righteous government. ' Further remissions were added later, exempting foreign merchants from payment of duties on gold and silver ; a third of the duty on the export of sandalwood was also remitted. Merchants were allowed liberty to sell their goods brought from other lands to anyone, and to carry in exchange Indian goods to other countries, with no restrictions. ( L. G. 267-78 ) As Mr K. M. Panikkar has pointed out in his recent book, *India and the Indian Ocean* : ' The period of

Hindu supremacy in the Ocean was one of complete freedom of trade and navigation. . . . There was evidently no question of monopoly or exclusion of others from free traffic on the seas.' ( p. 35 ) According to Abdur Razzak ( 1442 A. D. ) for instance, all ships, whencesoever they might have come and whithersoever they might be bound, were treated alike at Calicut. Hence Arabs, Chinese, and Romans freely traded with India and enriched themselves for several centuries.

The trade with the western world appears to have been at least as old as Solomon. ( c. 1,000 B. C. ) The words in Greek for rice, cinnamon, ivory, peacock, ape, etc. were derived from Tamil, thereby indicating the import of those articles from this country. It was on account of this familiarity with the near western countries that Asoka sent his famous missions to Ptolemy of Egypt, Antigonus of Syria, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epirus, during the 3rd century B. C. This was, of course, preceded by the contacts with ancient Persia, in the time of Darius and the invasion of India by Alexander the Great. The story of the marriage of Chandragupta Maurya with a Greek princess, as a result of his defeat of Seleukus Nikator and the treaty which followed, and the embassy of Bindusara to Antioch, for securing a Greek scholar 'at any price', are well known. During the Andhra-Kushan age ( 200 B. C. to 250 A. D. ), there was a prosperous trade—both by land and sea—with Western Asia, Greece, Rome and Egypt, as well as with China and the Far East. Embassies were sent, Indian elephants were used in Syrian warfare, and ( according to Pliny and the *Periplus* ) a vast amount of specie found its way into India ; Roman coins have been found in fairly large quantities in South India. In 68 A. D., a number of Jews, fleeing from Roman persecution, came to India and took

refuge on the Malabar coast. ( I. G. I. ii, 325 ) Pliny, in fact, complains of the drain of Roman gold – worth annually about £. 70,000 spent in the purchase of ‘ useless Oriental products, such as perfumes, unguents, and personal ornaments ’. ( Mommsen )

Early Tamil literature, too, contains frequent references testifying to the intercourse with Rome. Pepper, beryls, and pearls were the chief articles of trade in which India had the monopoly. ‘ Yavanas ’ acted as bodyguards to Tamil princes ; it is even stated that there was a Roman temple at Muziris, dedicated to Augustus. Yavanas were also settled near Pukar or Kaveripaddinam, near the mouth of the Kaveri river. Yavana wines, lamps, and vases were imported, and some of their bronzes have been discovered in the South. In the opinion of Caldwell, the *Periplus* contains the largest number of primitive Dravidian words found in any written document of ancient times. ( I. S. 129, 135 )

The *Mahābhārata* speaks of the *Romaka* who came to Yudhishtira on the occasion of the *Rājasūya* performed at Indraprastha. ( *Sabhā Parva*, 51 ) *Romaka Siddhānta* was an important astronomical work familiar to Indians during the early centuries of the Christian era. According to Varahamihira, ‘ When there is sun-rise in Lanka, it is mid-night in Romaka.’ Ptolemy’s Geography mentions almost all the important ports on the coasts of India, from Surat in the west to Konarak and Masulipatam in the east. A Tamil poet sings of ‘ the thriving port of Muchir [ Muziris ] to which the beautiful large ships of the Yavanas bring gold, and return laden with pepper ; they come splashing with white foam in the water of the Periyar which belongs to Cherala.’ Marco Polo, as we have noted before, has referred to this rich pepper trade of Malabar. He also speaks of Cail ( Kayal )

as 'a great and noble city where all the ships touch that come from the West, from Hormos and Kis, from Aden and Arabia, laden with horses and other articles for sale.' The king, says he, 'maintains great state and administers his kingdom with much equity, and extends great favour to merchants and foreigners.' ( F. N. 179 )

Great as the intercourse with the West was, it was even greater and more intimate with China and the East. Here it was not confined to mere trade; with China it was cultural as well as commercial; while with the rest of South-east Asia it was also colonial. Tamralipti, or Tamluk in Bengal, and Masulipatam in the Andhra country, were two of the great *entrepôts* about which we might cite, for illustration, the impressions of foreigners. The *Periplus* refers to Tamluk as 'a great commercial city near the mouth of the Ganges, the trade of which consisted chiefly of cloth of the most delicate texture and extreme beauty.' I-Tsing speaks of the five or six monasteries which existed there, and describes its people as rich: 'this is the place where we embarked when returning to China.' ( I. S. 161-2 ) 'Down to the days of the Mohammedan conquest,' writes a Japanese observer, 'the intrepid mariners of the Bengal coast went by the ancient highways of the seas, founding their colonies, in Ceylon, Java, Sumatra, and binding Cathay ( China ) and India fast in mutual intercourse.' ( I. E. 1-2 ) Sonargaon and Satgaon were other important centres of foreign trade in Bengal, in early times. As late as 1000 A. D., Tavernier wrote: 'Masulipatam is the only place in the Bay of Bengal from which vessels sailed eastward for Bengal, Arakan, Pegu, Siam, Sumatra, Cochin-China and the Manillas; and west to Hormuz, Makha and Madagascar.' ( i. 174 )

The Indians who settled in Pegu ( Lower Burma ) were called ' Talaings ' because they originally came from the Telugu country. Similarly, those who hailed from Orissa or Kalinga were known in Singapore as the 'Klings'. ' The histories of Java, ' writes Elphinstone, ' give a distinct account of a numerous body of Hindus from Clinga [ Kalinga ] who landed on this Island, civilized the inhabitants, and fixed the date of their arrival by establishing the era still subsisting, the first year of which fell in the 75th after Christ. Truth of this narrative is proved beyond doubt by the numerous and magnificent Hindu remains that are still existing in Java, and by the fact that, although the common language is Malay, the sacred language—that of historical and political compositions and of most inscriptions—is a dialect of Sanskrit. The early date is almost decisively proved by the journal of the Chinese pilgrim, in the end of the 4th century, who found Java entirely peopled by Hindus, and who sailed from the Ganges to Ceylon from Ceylon to Java, and from Java to China, in ships manned by crews professing the Brahmanical religion.' ( H. I. 185 )

The intercourse with China is very old; its story is still a subject of research, though much light has been thrown on it, in recent years, by numerous documents found in China itself. The first Indian to reach China by the sea-route appears to have been one Buddhabhadra ( of the Sakya clan ), who was in China in 398 A. D.—i.e. two years before Fa Hian came to India. ( *cf.* I. O. 7-8, 32, 211-10 ) In 401 A. D., another Buddhist scholar, Kumarajiva by name, entered China *via* Kashmir. According to Dr Bagchi, ' he was responsible for starting a new epoch in the transmission of Buddhism to China...He won unparalleled reputation there, as the most efficient interpreter of Buddhism. Kumarajiva symbolizes the spirit o





BATTLE SCENE FROM THE *Kāmāgama*: ANGKOR VAT, CAMBODIA





cultural collaboration between Central Asia and India, and the joint effort made by the Buddhist scholars of these countries for the dissemination of Indian culture in China. ( ib. 37-8 ) He was followed by Gunavarman from Kabul, in 431, and by a Simhalese, named Sanghavarman, in 433 A. D. ( ib. 226 ) Within a year of this, a party of Indian Buddhist nuns also arrived in China ; while Gunabhadra – the translator of *Sanyukta-âgama* ( a MS of which had been taken to China by Fa Hian ) – reached that country in 435. Sanghavarman, who had gone to China by the land-route, returned to India by sea in 442 A. D.

Perhaps the most famous Indian since Kumarajiva, who died in 413, was Bodhidharma, who, at a very advanced age, left Ceylon and reached Canton in 226 A. D. In assessing his work, a Japanese writer ( Okakura ) has said that, at one time, in the province of Lo-Yang alone, there were ‘ more than 3,000 Indian monks and 10,000 families who were at work to impress their Indian national religion and art on Chinese soil.’ ( *Ideals of the East*, p. 113 ) Bodhidharma also visited Japan and was well received by Shotoku Taishi—the ‘ Japanese Asoka ’ ( 573-621 A. D. ). Yet another Indian Buddhist monk to go to Japan was Bodhisena who taught Sanskrit to the Japanese priests, in 736 A. D. He appears to have been loved alike by the Emperor and the people.

Indians carried to China and Japan the products of their industry, no less than their religion and culture. ( I. S. 174 ). In the time of the Cholas, particularly during the 11th century, several embassies were despatched to China by the rulers of South India in order to secure their trade interest. ‘ The imports into China consisted of two distinct categories of goods : one, manufactured cotton-fabrics, spices and drugs ; the other, and by far the most valuable intrinsically, jewels and semi-

precious substances, such as ivory, rhinoceros-horn, ebony, amber, coral and the like, and various aromatic products and perfumes, used either in the preparation of incense or for perfuming the body.' Even two centuries later, articles of export to China from the Tamil country, practically, remained the same. According to Chau Ju-kau, they comprised pearls, ivory, coral, transparent and opaque glass, cotton and silk stuffs, cardamoms and betel-nuts. ( *The Colas*, pp. 435-41 )

To pass on from this to Greater India, both Chinese and native sources relate stories of one Kaundinya, who appears to have been the founder of the Hindu power in Fu-nan or south Cambodia. This was in the first century A. D. ' He changed all the laws and regulations according to Indian tradition. ' In the time of one of his descendants, an embassy was sent to the Chinese Emperor ( by Jayavarman, in 484 A. D. ). The result of this was that the title of " General of the Pacific South and King of Fu-nan " was conferred upon Jayavarman by the Celestial Emperor. In the middle of the sixth century, Fu-nan was subjugated by Kambhuja ( Cambodia ); thereafter we have Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions with which to supplement Chinese accounts. According to I-Tsing, ' The Law of Buddha had prospered and expanded in Fu-nan ; but at the end of the 7th century, a wicked king completely destroyed it, and there are no monks now. ' A Sanskrit inscription of Bhavarman states : ' The dust raised by his army settling down on the cheeks of the women of the enemy—from which all decorations had vanished—looked like sandal-powder....Having first conquered the ocean-girdled earth by force, in his administration, he conquered it a second time by his kind forbearance. ' However, this new dynasty, too, was conquered by another whose most

illustrious ruler was Yashovarman (889-91 A. D.). His epigraphic records are digraphic, i. e. inscribed in two scripts—*Nāgari* and *Pallava* (S. Indian). In the words of Mr Panikkar, 'The inscriptions of Cambodia and Java are in Pallava characters; the architecture of the period is distinctly inspired by Pallava achievements, and in fact Pallava leadership is writ large in the history of Java, Champa (Siam) and Cambodia, in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries.' (I. I. O. 32)

The great empire of Sri Vijaya, founded by Indians in the Indian Archipelago, including a part of Peninsular Malaya, flourished from the 5th to the 10th century. In its heyday it maintained a powerful navy which swept the seas of the pirates, and extended its arms even up to Ceylon, until it was challenged by the Cholas. After a hundred years' struggle for supremacy, in the Indian Ocean [like that between England and the U. S. A. in the Atlantic] Mother and Daughter appeared to acquiesce in the recognition of each other's strength; but, by that time, both were overpowered by the Muslims and the Europeans. But we are interested, here, more in their cultural history, than in their political vicissitudes. Yashodharapura, which was founded by the above-mentioned Yashovarman, was regarded as 'the greatest and most artistic city of the world in the Middle Ages'. It is better known by its more popular name of Angkor Thom. Buddhism was again revived by Jayavarman V who is described in an inscription as having 'once more lighted the torch of the True Law...and brought from foreign lands a large number of books on philosophy like the commentary on *Tattva-Samgraha* - so that their study might spread.' But, at the close of the 11th century, another dynastic change brought about a religious revolution too—now in favour

of Vaishnavism. It immortalized itself by the construction of the celebrated Angkor Vat which was designed by Divakara Pandita, the preceptor of Suryavarman II. M Henri Mouhot, a French naturalist, who discovered it in 1860, described it as 'the most wonderful structure in the world, the like of which Greece or Rome had never built !'

The last ruler of this dynasty, Jayavarman VII, is noted for the erection of no fewer than 102 hospitals (*ārogyaśālas*) in different parts of his dominions; every year provisions and medicines were supplied to them from the royal stores. They included honey, pippali, ajowan, nutmegs, *kshāra* (alkalis), camphor, aniseed, cardamoms, cloves, deodar, asafoetida, garlic, a paste of ten roots, and 1960 boxes of medicine for piles.' In his inscription, the kind-hearted monarch states: 'The physical pain of the patients became in me a pain of the soul, and it was more acutely felt by me than by the invalid men themselves; for it is the sufferings of the State that constitute the pain of the rulers and not their own sufferings.' (C. H. I. iii. 109)

This, indeed, is strongly reminiscent of the edicts of Asoka. In fact, almost everything in Java, Sumatra, Bali, and those other islands of Greater India, is INDIAN. Their names, their art, their monuments, traditions, thoughts and sentiments, are all Indian—even to this day. A typical example is that of an inscription of Sri Suryavarman, dated 924 *śaka* (1002 A. D.) which speaks of the *Sūrya-vamsa* in which that king was born, and what is more: 'His feet are the *bhāshyas* of Patanjali, his hands are the *kāvya*s, his six organs the *Ṣad-darśanas*, and the *Dharma-śāstras* are his head!' Greater identification with Indian culture is difficult to imagine. Another impersonal illustration is provided

by the Mahayanist *stūpa* of Java, excavated by the Sri Vijaya rulers, reminding us of the great Kailas temple of Ellora. Like its prototype in the Motherland, it is carved out of a hill with only this difference, that the Javanese monument is Buddhist, while the Indian is Shaiva. Its marvellous sculptures represent mainly scenes from the *Lalita-vistāra*; but other themes are also represented on successive galleries, until, rising tier on tier, they culminate in the simple grandeur of the *śikhara*—the entire plan being an illustration of the spiritual ascent of man unto *Nirvāṇa*! Likewise, in the Shaiva temple of Prambanam, we find the essential eclecticism of the Indian reflected in art. Although the central deity worshipped is Shiva, the other gods of the Hindu pantheon are represented freely in the sculptures around. ‘In the first scene, the gods, led by a *rishi*, invoke Vishnu reclining on the *śeṣa* and drifting on the ocean; the last scene is from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, showing the building of the bridge to Lanka. It appears to have been continued on the walls of the adjoining Brahma temple, now in ruins. ‘Nowhere else, whether in India, Cambodia, or Siam, are the exploits of Rama depicted in so artistic a way. The Javanese, converted to Islam more than three centuries ago, still throng the temples with offerings of incense and flowers. Indeed the *Rāmāyaṇa* is still a living force in Java. The Javanese masses, even today, regard Rama and the Pandavas as national heroes, born and brought up on the island of JAVA.’ Shadow-shows or *wāyang* (*vāyu-anga*?), representing scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, still afford the most popular entertainments, whether in the palaces of the Javanese princes, or in the humbler abodes of the poor.’ (ib. 113-14)

Perhaps, the most outstanding work on this subject, published in recent years, is *Suvarṇa Dvīpa* by Dr R. C. Majumdar ( 2 vols., 1933 ). Starting with the political and economic relations with India, he has made therein an extensive survey of culture and civilization, art and archaeology, of the entire Archipelago of Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes and the Philippines. ‘ Everywhere we notice the simultaneous existence of Brahmanical and Buddhist cults, often tending to fuse into one another, and producing peculiar images of Vishnu, Garuda, Ganesha, Shiva, Buddha, Bhairava, etc., found in different parts of Malaya.’ ‘ In spite of their general conversion to Islam, and partial conversion to Christianity,’ observes Dr Kalidas Nag, ‘ the peoples of Java have retained some of the finest traits of Hindu culture, and Bali continues to be predominantly Hindu.’ Our Indian Universities, he suggests, will benefit immensely by sending research scholars to those not-too-far-away cultural colonies of Indonesia, where they might discover many more links of our common artistic and spiritual life. What India took to the Pacific world, he says, were not conquering armies, but the ‘ fertilizing influence in the domain of spiritual, intellectual, and artistic creation. There might have been occasional lapses into conflicts in the course of racial migrations, but there was no sordid chapter of economic exploitation, or political domination, in the development of Greater India, which, coming as a legacy from emperor Asoka of the 3rd century B. C. continued for over 1000 years to foster the fundamental principle of *maitri* ( fellowship ) and *kalyāṇa* ( universal well-being ) which formed the bed-rock of Hindu-Buddhist idealism.’ ( I. P. W. 158, 284 ) ‘ Neither the merchants nor the State in South India,’ observes Professor Nilkanta Sastri, ‘ had any idea of the possibilities of economic





STONE IMAGE OF THE BUDDHA: CAMBODIA





imperialism....It never occurred to them that foreign lands may be compelled to buy and sell at the point of the bayonet ! ' ( C. 423 )

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## CHAPTER VIII

### MONUMENTS OF GREATNESS

*'The Indians do not rear monuments to the dead, but consider the virtues which they have displayed in life, and the songs in which their praises are celebrated, sufficient to preserve their memory after death.'*

MEGASTHENES

**A**RCHAEOLOGICAL monuments are an important source of information, very much prized by historians; they are also of value sometimes as treasures of art, which provide a basis for continuity of traditions. Where the names of their builders and artists are known, they acquire a personal charm that anonymity denies to works whose authorship is not merely unknown, but also incapable of being ascertained. Yet, this very anonymity, it cannot be gainsaid, often imparts to such works an air of mystery, which is in itself an important asset, culturally speaking, however baffling this factor may be to the antiquarian. The Taj Mahal is not less magnificent, but perhaps more so, because we cannot be so certain who the architect was who designed it, as we are, for instance, that Sir Christopher Wren designed St Paul's Cathedral in London. Nor are the frescoes of Ajanta less exquisite because we do not know who painted them. In India, this anonymity has not been accidental; it is a distinctive national trait. 'The modern world, with its glorification of the personality of authors', observes Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 'produces works of genius and works of mediocrity, following the peculiarities of individual artists. In India, the virtue or defect of any work is the virtue or defect of the race in

that age. The names and peculiarities of individual artists, even if we could recover them, would not enlighten us: nothing depends upon [individual] genius or requires the knowledge of an individual psychology for its interpretation. To understand it at all, we must understand experiences common to all men of the time and place in which a given work was produced.' This is true of the *Vedas*, as well as of the marvellous Kailas excavations; equally true is it even of the building of the city of Mohenjo-daro, about five thousand years ago. This monumental anonymity is indeed writ large on the brow of our civilization.

If the full significance of the foregoing is to be correctly realized, it is necessary to recollect what we have said in earlier chapters about the fundamental outlook of the Indian. In arts, ours is but 'the statement of a racial experience', because, in philosophy, we thought along the line of *Vedānta*; we also translated this, in actual life, by the creation of a form of society in which the harmony of life was expressed in terms of cosmic perspectives. In it the basic concept was that the individual is only a part, an infinitesimally small, though vital part; but society is the human counterpart of the macrocosm of the Universe. This made us feel at home with the cosmos. It also developed in us an essentially humane attitude towards all living beings, promoting a sense of kinship with our 'little sisters and brothers'—in the language of St Francis of Assisi—the birds of heaven and the beasts of the jungle. That is why we inculcated hospitality and *ahimsā*; that is why Asoka built hospitals for animals no less than for men. That, again, was why Jayavarman of Java felt the pain of his ailing subjects more than his own, and Suryavarman

considered that the *śaḍ-darśhanas* were almost his six organs of sense. This peculiar Indian capacity for realizing strange identities has resulted in the personification of the cosmic *Purusha* and Mother India, on the one hand; while it has, on the other, tried to depersonalize essentially human relations. Man is asked to suppress his ego and realize his oneness or unity with society and creation. The family and the community were the instruments of such a spiritual education. The individual exists for society; and society exists for an ideal; that ideal is the realization of SATYAM-SHIVAM-SUNDARAM.

We shall, therefore, consider our 'monuments of greatness' in the light of these remarks. We shall think of them, first, in terms of 'brick and mortar' as in Mohenjo-daro; second, of the 'civic organization' as in Pataliputra; and third, in terms of 'the pursuit of ideals' as personified in Asoka, Akbar and Shivaji—for these were men who tried to build up societies 'monumental in their greatness'. As we do with the Buddha and Gandhi, so we look upon them, not with the eyes of biographers, but with the understanding of philosophical historians. The Buddha himself told his disciples: 'Do not consider the personality of Gautama as your guiding light, O Bhikkus! Whatever there is of personality is bound to undergo decay; but the Truth remains the same. Go forth, ye Bhikkus, for the good of the many: be lamps unto yourselves, and lead forth others to the Truth.' In the same spirit, Guru Govind Singh dissolved the Sikh apostolate, and asked his disciples to remember that, wherever five Sikhs gathered, he would be present in them; and for the rest, the *Granth Sāhib* should be the sole source of illumination and inspiration.

In 1924, the Director-General of Archaeology in India, Sir John Marshall, wrote : ' Hitherto India has almost universally been regarded as one of the younger countries of the world. Apart from the Palaeolithic and Neolithic implements, and such other rude primitive remains, as the Cyclopean walls of Rajagriha, no monuments of note were known to exist, of an earlier date than the 3rd century B. C. when Greece had already passed her zenith, and when the mighty empires of Mesopotamia and Egypt had been all but forgotten. Now, at a single bound, we have taken back our Indian civilization some 3,000 years earlier, and established the fact that, in the third millennium before Christ, and even before that, the peoples of the Punjab and Sind were living in well-built cities and were in possession of a relatively mature culture with a high standard of art and craftsmanship, and a developed system of pictographic writing. ' ( A. R. 47 )

It is not possible to give a full account of this civilization within our small compass. Sir John Marshall has himself devoted three volumes to the subject; much has also been written since, to make our knowledge more definite on many specific points raised by the discovery. We shall, however, touch upon some of its most outstanding features. As I have stated in my *A Brief Survey of Human History* : ' Here, for the first time, we come to a chapter of History where nothing will be said about kings and conquerors, empires and armies, but everything about the people, their habits and customs, their arts and religion, etc. It is the History of peace rather than of war, unlike that of Assyria and Babylonia or even Egypt. We have here no dynasties or dates to commit to memory, and no strange names to remember. It is one even picture of man as MAN and

his doings, undisturbed by the inhumanities of war and imperialism. If there were kings in the Indus Valley we know nothing about them. It is just possible that the people of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa governed themselves without the expensive luxury of monarchs. If this were so, we have in them our earliest self-governing communities that were not village-republics but autonomous city-states. Considering the early history of Sumer, this does not appear unlikely. '

Harappa was the larger of the two cities ; but its ruins being quarried for bricks, during successive ages, it has been reduced to comparative insignificance today. Mohenjo-daro, or 'the City of the Dead,' lay undiscovered until recently on account of its obscurity. Unlike Sumer and Babylon, these two cities were built entirely of red burnt bricks, and have consequently better withstood the ravages of time. The spade of the excavator has here unearthed layer after layer of buildings, superimposed one upon another, like the nine cities of Troy. These strata of civilization represent at least two ages : the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic. The implements, weapons, and utensils are all made either of flint, polished stone, or copper and bronze. Gold, silver and alloys like electron, have also been found, besides inferior metals like tin and zinc ; but there is no trace whatever of iron, either at Mohenjo-daro or Harappa. Iron did not exist in Sumer, was very rare in Babylon, and used only for weapons in Assyria. Scholars have, therefore, found a clue in this to the age of the Indus civilization. But on that account we are not to suppose that it was a very primitive or crude culture. The people of Mohenjo-daro, as well as, presumably, of Harappa, were used to cosmetics, fine jewellery, and a high standard of living, as revealed by their excellent habitations and furnishings.



Mohenjo-daro was a model of town-planning, conforming to the principles later on described in our *S'ilpa-S'āstras*. Its broad streets, with straight rows of buildings, running due north and south, with cross-roads cutting at right-angles and running due east and west, may be seen even today. The main street was 33 feet wide, and the others hardly less than 18 ft. across. There was besides, a network of lanes, equally straight in their construction, separating the several blocks of buildings from one another. As a rule, individual houses never touched each other, but were always separated by alleys which provided the only access to them.....Houses were invariably built on raised platforms, and generally possessed an upper storey. This was necessitated by the constant danger of floods from which the city suffered on several occasions. In the larger houses, there was a porter's lodge at the entrance, and usually the ground-floor was used only by the servants, and for kitchen, bath, etc. The living-rooms were all upstairs. Every house was provided with its own well, in the centre of the court-yard, as we might see them even now.

The most astonishing feature, however, was the sanitary system of Mohenjo-daro. Each house had a well-constructed sink from which used-up water was drained into underground sewers in the streets. Archaeologists and modern engineers have marvelled at the skill with which the entire system was planned as well as executed. It is obvious that such efficient co-ordination between domestic and public construction could not have been achieved but for the existence of an advanced municipal administration. It is equally patent that the Indus people were very punctilious about cleanliness. This is evidenced both by their sanitary

system, and by the provision made for bathing, not merely in their houses, but also in public. Public baths, such as those of Mohenjo-daro, have never been witnessed anywhere else before the days of the Roman Empire.

The art of the archaeologist has, indeed, given a new lease of life to the dry bones in the valley, and enabled us to reconstruct the picture of that wonderful civilization, with the materials made available by his magic spade. Besides brick and mortar, these materials comprise a few skeletons, arms, pottery, utensils of copper and bronze, jewellery, toys, and, above all, some intriguing seals, amulets, etc. Even with all these before us, the picture is as yet incomplete ; no one can say how long we may have to wait until it is completed. But this much we have gained, again in the words of Marshall : ‘ Five thousand years ago, before even the Aryans were heard of, the Punjab and Sind were enjoying an advanced civilization, closely akin, but in some respects even superior, to that of contemporary Mesopotamia and Egypt...This is what the discoveries at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro now place beyond doubt.’

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Another great centre of ancient Indian civilization was Pataliputra. It was a city built in the tongue of land between the Ganges and the Son ( modern Patna in Bihar ). Its length was about nine miles, and its breadth a mile and a half. It was protected by a timber palisade, some remains of which have been found in recent excavations. Its fortifications were pierced by sixty-four gates and crowned with five-hundred-and-seventy towers, and surrounded by a deep moat. The administration of this great city was elaborately organized and entrusted to a commission of thirty members, which

was divided into six departmental boards, each with five members. It is interesting to note that the duty of one board was to maintain an accurate register of births and deaths, which was prepared both for revenue purposes and for the information of the Government. The war-office was similarly administered by a commission of thirty members, divided into six boards of five members each, charged severally with the care of the admiralty, transport and commissariat, infantry, cavalry, war-chariots and elephants. An irrigation department controlled the distribution of water for irrigation purposes, and the land-revenue was collected by proper officers. The palace, of which the remains may be still traced to the south of the road between Bankipore and Patna, was an extensive collection of buildings, standing in a pleasant park well-furnished with ponds and trees. In the time of Chandragupta, the royal buildings were probably constructed to a large extent of wood, like the Burmese palace at Mandalay ; but, from the reign of his grandson, Asoka, brick and stone were generally substituted for timber. We have already noted the impressions of this city left by Megasthenes and the Chinese travellers. The soul of this phase of our civilization, however, was Asoka, who constituted in himself one of its greatest monuments. He is admittedly unique among rulers in the entire history of mankind.

‘ Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs ’, wrote H. G. Wells, ‘ that crowd the columns of history—their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like—the name of Asoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star. From the Volga to Japan, his name is still honoured. China, Tibet, and even India, though it has left his doctrines (*sic*) preserve the traditions of his greatness. More

living men cherish his memory to-day than have ever heard the name of Constantine or Charlemagne.' H. G. Rawlinson observes: 'He has been compared at various times to Marcus Aurelius, St Paul and Constantine. But no Christian ruler has even attempted to apply to the government of a great empire the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, or to announce, in a public edict addressed to his subjects, that "although a man does him injury, His Majesty holds that it must be patiently borne, as far as it can possibly be borne." Two-hundred-and-fifty years before Christ, Asoka had the courage to express his horror and remorse at the results of a successful campaign, and deliberately to renounce war as a means of policy, in spite of the fact that his dominions included the unsubdued tribes of the north-west frontier; and was able, in practice, to put an end to cruelty to man and beast, and establish complete religious toleration throughout India. Asoka fulfilled Plato's ideal of the State in which "kings are philosophers and philosophers are kings."'

Well merited as this encomium is, it is not to be forgotten that Asoka was but the kingly instrument of a greater than himself—one whom Kenneth Saunders has correctly described as India's Greatest Son. 'One thing only do I teach, O monks: Sorrow and its extinction,' declared the Buddha; and no greater revolution has been brought about in history, by the use of means peculiarly Indian, than the one effected by this noblest of our reformers:

As men gaze at its towering peaks and judge Himālaya,  
So when they see the Buddha, Peak of Righteousness,  
Serene, unmoved by passion's stormy blast,  
Tower aloft in wondrous calm and peace,  
Then evil dies, and lust can breathe no more.

‘High as Himalaya the Hero and His Word,’  
They cry : ‘How great His power to redeem from ill!’

*Milinda Panha*

It was by carrying out the high principles of this Great Master, in the administration of his great empire, that Asoka carved out for himself a niche in world history, next only to that assigned to the Buddha by universal assent. So much did he strive to fulfil this mission that he attended to the business of state ‘even while his toilet was in progress.’ After witnessing the holocaust of the Kalinga campaign, even though he was victorious, he felt that war was inconsistent with the Law of the Buddha, and ‘formed a fixed resolve to abstain henceforth from conquest by force of arms, and to devote himself to the Chiefest Conquest—that of men’s hearts.’ The propaganda carried out for this purpose was stimulated by the King’s personal example, and by the multiplication of monasteries throughout the Empire, and even in the territories of friendly powers. Each monastery thus founded became a fresh centre for the diffusion of the Buddhist gospel. Popular interest in the royal teaching was further secured by the provision, at government expense, of material comforts for man and beast. The highroads were marked with milestones and shaded by avenues of trees. Camping grounds were furnished with wells, mango-groves and rest-houses for travellers. Hospitals were founded, and medicinal herbs, wherever they were lacking, were freely imported and planted. The severity of the penal code was mitigated, and on each anniversary of the coronation, prisoners were liberated. In these ways, and by a watchful supervision over public morals, Asoka demonstrated the sincerity of his faith, and secured an astonishing degree of success in his efforts to propagate the

system of the Buddha. But he did not force his creed upon his 'children,' as he called his subjects. He fully recognized the right of all sects and creeds to live and let live, and did not hesitate to adopt a policy of concurrent endowment. In respect of this active toleration, his conduct was in accordance with that of most monarchs of ancient India. By his efforts Buddhism which had hitherto been a merely local sect, in the valley of the Ganges, was transformed into one of the greatest religions of the world. 'This is Asoka's claim to be remembered: this it is which makes his reign an epoch, not only in the history of India, but in that of the world.' (I. G. I. ii. 282 ff)

In a sense we know Asoka, writes V. A. Smith, better than we know any other ancient monarch, because he speaks to us in his own words. It is impossible for any student to read the Edicts with care, and not to hear the voice of the king himself. 'We can discern in those records,' he says, 'a man of strong will, unwearied application, and high aims, who spared no labour in the pursuit of his ideals, possessed the mental grasp capable of forming the vast conception of missionary enterprise in three continents, and was, at the same time, able to control the affairs of Church and State in an empire, which the most powerful sovereign might envy. His plan of committing to the faithful keeping of the rocks, his code of moral duty, was equally original and bold, and his intense desire that his measures should result in the long edurance of the Good Law, as taught in those ordinances, has been fulfilled in no small measure by the preservation of some thirty-five separate documents to this day.' (*Asoka*, 105-6)

'I am never fully satisfied,' proclaims the Emperor, 'with my efforts and my dispatch of business. Work I



must for the welfare of all ; the root of the matter is in effort, and nothing is more efficacious to secure the welfare of all.' In his edicts, he instructs his officers to induce even the wild tribes 'to trust me and grasp the truth that the King is to us even as a father ; he loves us even as he loves himself ; we are to the King even as his children.' Asoka was, perhaps, the only monarch to appoint *Dharma-mahāmātras*, or Superintendents of Public Morals, not for the enforcement of a State religion, but morality. The duties of these censors, as defined in his Rock and Pillar edicts, included jurisdiction in cases of injuries inflicted on animals, exhibitions of gross filial disrespect, and other breaches of the moral rules prescribed by authority. They were instructed also to redress cases of wrongful confinement or corporal punishment, and empowered to grant remission of sentences when the offenders deserved consideration by reason of advanced years, sudden calamity, or the burden of a large family. They shared, with the Inspectors of Women, the delicate duty of supervising women's morals (including the household of the royal family), both at the capital and in the provinces.

As a sample of his 'sermons in stones,' we might cite the Dhauli Rock Edict :

'The High Officers of Tosali, in charge of the administration of the city, are to be addressed as follows, at the command of His Sacred Majesty—Whatsoever I view as right, I want it to be carried out in practice, and fulfilled by proper means. This is regarded by me as the principal means to this end, namely, to issue these instructions to you ; for you are placed over thousands of souls in order to win the people's affections. All men are my children ; as on behalf of my own children I desire that they may be blessed with complete welfare and happiness, both in this world and in the next, the same I wish for all



men also. .... See to it then, although you are well provided for, that no individual undergoes imprisonment, or torture, which accidentally becomes the cause of his death, and many other persons are deeply aggrieved over it. You must demand that the Middle Path be observed. One cannot achieve success through impatience, cruelty, envy, or laziness ..... The root of the whole matter is steadiness and patience. He who is tired in administration will never succeed; hence everyone should move on, advance. .... Observance of this produces great good; non-observance great calamity. The reason why this edict has been inscribed here is that the city magistrates may strive, all the time, that there might not be imprisonment of the citizens or their torture without cause. And for this purpose, I shall depute every five years a *Mahāmātra* who would be neither harsh nor violent, but considerate in action, in order to ascertain whether the judicial officers are acting according to my instructions.....'

How these noble ideals continued to inspire rulers of India, in later times, is illustrated by the policy of the greatest of the Mughal emperors, Akbar. We have noted before that, according to Abul Fazl, it was Akbar's view that the 'noblest employments for rulers are the reformation of the manners of the people, the advancement of agriculture, the regulation of the officers, and discipline of the army.' These desirable ends, he further states, 'are not to be attained without studying to please the people, combined with good government of the finances, and an exact economy in the management of the State.' When these are kept in view, he also adds, 'every class of people enjoys prosperity.' Akbar's methods for the realization of these objectives are described by Moreland as 'severely practical.' He too, like Asoka, appointed *Muhtasibs* or Censors of Public Morals. He ordered them to see that, in

the cities ( where these vices are most rampant ), the sale of intoxicating drinks and the residence of ' professional women ' was not permitted, as it was opposed to the Sacred Law : ' Give good counsel and warning to those who violate the Quranic precepts,' he said, 'and do not show harshness, for then they would give you trouble. First send advice to the leaders of those people ; and if they do not listen to you, then report the case to the Government.'

Akbar's programme of ' reformation of the manners of the people ' also extended to fixing the minimum ages for marriage – 16 in the case of boys and 14 in the case girls ' because the offspring of early marriages are weakly', the encouragement of widow-remarriage, the restriction of *sati* to those only who could not be prevailed upon to desist from it, the prohibition of cow-slaughter ( out of regard for Hindu sentiment, as well as considerations of the needs of agriculture ), the abolition of the invidious *jiziya* and pilgrim-taxes, etc. He also forbade forcible conversions, and marriages between Hindus and Muslims brought about by abduction, or other nefarious methods ; but he himself set the vogue for union by agreement. ' For an empire ruled by one head,' he rightly thought, ' it was a bad thing to have the members divided among themselves, and at variance one with another... We ought, therefore, to bring them all into One, but in such a manner that they should be ONE and ALL, with the great advantage of not losing what is good in one religion, while gaining whatever is better in another. In this way honour would be rendered to God, peace would be given to the people, and security to the empire.' ( Bartoli ) ' People should not be molested,' he also declared, ' if they wished to build churches for prayer, or idol temples,

or fire-temples.' (*Ain*. 208) It will be recalled that Asoka's edicts also stated: 'All sects are honoured by me...All should listen and be willing to listen to the doctrines professed by others.'

It was for the realization of this union that Akbar promulgated his *Din-e-Ilahi*; though it did not succeed in its objectives, the failure was certainly not due to Akbar. His methods were those of Asoka, who never had recourse to any compulsion in matters of religion. India might have been a happier land if Akbar had succeeded in the realization of his great and noble ideals. 'The personal force of his character,' says V. A. Smith, 'discernible even now with sufficient clearness, was overpowering to his contemporaries...He was a born king of men, with a rightful claim to be regarded as one of the mightiest sovereigns known to history.' Indeed, he was a great king, stated one of the contemporary Jesuits, 'for he knew that the good ruler is he who can command, simultaneously, the obedience, the respect, the love and the fear of his subjects. He was a prince beloved of all, firm with the great, kind to those of low estate, and just to all men—high and low, neighbour or stranger, Christian, Saracen or Gentile; so that every man believed that the king was on his side. He lived in the fear of God, whom he never failed to pray four times daily—at sunrise, at sunset, at midday, and at midnight; and despite his many duties, his prayers on these four occasions, which were of considerable duration, were never curtailed. Towards his fellowmen, he was kind and forbearing, averse from taking life, and quick to show mercy. Hence it was that he decreed that, if he condemned any one to death, the sentence was not to be carried into effect until the receipt of his third order. He was always glad to pardon an offender, if just

grounds for doing so could be shown.' (C. H. I. iv. 154-5) No wonder that Havell considered : 'Akbar's endeavours to realise the Aryan ideal are still worthy of imitation both by the British rulers of India, and by all statesmen for whom politics is a religion rather than a game of craft and skill.' (A. R. I. 537)

The duties of the *kotwals* (like those of Asoka's *sthānikas*), as defined in the *Ain-e-Akbari*, are a good illustration of the detailed manner in which the high ideals of government were sought to be carried out in practice. Abul Fazl, who was Akbar's most trusted official, states that a person to be qualified for the *kotwal's* office 'should be vigorous, experienced, active, deliberate, patient, astute and humane.' These were the very qualities which Asoka also had expected from his officers. For, after all, the real character of an administration ultimately depends upon the qualities of its local officials. The *kotwal's* duties were as comprehensive as they were onerous : from the inspection of the prisons to the supervision of the roads and ferries, as well as the observance of festivals by the people, the regulation of the weights and measures, and even the checking of private incomes and expenditure, all came within his jurisdiction — 'because when a man spends in excess of his income, it is certain that he is doing something wrong.' A brief narration of his functions will serve to make the picture of the *kotwal* very vivid. Abul Fazl has stated them as follows :

'Through his watchfulness and night-patrolling, the citizens should enjoy the repose of security, and the evil-disposed should lie in the slough of non-existence. He should keep a register of houses and frequented roads, and engage the citizens in pledge of reciprocal assistance, and bind them to a common participation of weal and woe. He should form a quarter by the union of a certain

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number of habitations and appoint one of his intelligent subordinates to its superintendence and receive a daily report, under his seal, of those who enter or leave it, and of whatever events therein occur. He should appoint as a spy one among the obscure residents with whom the others should have no acquaintance, and keeping their reports in writing, employ a heedful scrutiny....He should minutely observe the income and expenditure of the various classes of men, and, by a refined address, make his vigilance reflect honour on his administration.

'Of every guild of artificers, he should name one as Guild-Master, and another as a broker, by whose intelligence the business of purchase and sale should be conducted. From these he should require reports. When the night is a little advanced, he should prohibit people from entering or leaving the city. He should set the idle to some handicraft.....He should discover thieves and the goods they have stolen, or be responsible for the loss. He should so direct that no one can demand a tax or cess, save on arms, elephants, horses, cattle, camels, sheep, goats, and merchandise.

'In every *subah* a light impost shall be levied at an appointed place. Old coins should be given-in to be melted down, or consigned to the treasury as bullion. He should suffer no alteration in the value of the gold and silver coins of the realm, and its diminution by wear in circulation. He should use his discretion in the reduction of prices, and not allow purchases to be made outside the city. The rich shall not take beyond what is necessary for their consumption. He shall examine the weights, and make the *ser* not more than 30 *dams*. In the *gaz*, he should permit neither increase nor decrease, and restrain the people from making, dispensing, buying or selling wine, but refrain from invading the privacy of domestic life.

'Of the property of a deceased person who may have no heir, he shall make an inventory and keep it in his care. He should reserve separate ferries and wells for men and women. He should appoint persons of respectable character to supply water ; and prohibit women from



riding horses. He should direct that no horse or buffalo or camel be slaughtered, and forbid the restriction of personal liberty and the selling of slaves. He should not suffer a woman to be burnt against her inclination, nor a criminal deserving of death to be impaled, nor any one to be circumcised under the age of twelve.'

This illuminating picture throws light not only on the duties and functions of the *kotwal*, but equally well serves to enlighten us on the principles and policies of Akbar's Government. What is most noteworthy is the insistence on refinement in the conduct of Government officials, their respectability of character, and the desirability of non-interference with public liberties and honour. These are quite in keeping with the spirit of our civilization, though, it is not to be forgotten, they were being inculcated by a Muslim emperor. Shivaji was the last independent Hindu ruler to be inspired by such a high purpose.

According to the *Ādnāpatra*, the aim of Shivaji was that 'all people should be free from trouble and should follow the path of *Dharma*.' In the traditional Hindu manner, he assumed the role of the Protector; the title of *Chhatrapati* (lit. 'lord of the umbrella'), which he chose, was symbolic of this. Other ambitious monarchs in the world had chosen the lion, the unicorn and the eagle—all equally truculent—to signify their aims. But to an Indian, even the function of a king was no different from that of others; it was the fulfilment of *Dharma*. In the language of the *Ādnāpatra*: 'Kings who lived in the past, succeeded in this world, and acquired a place in the next, with the help of *Dharma*... Believing with a firm faith in the practice of *Dharma*, the worship of God, and the acquisition of the favours of saintly persons—the attainment of the welfare of all, and the prosperity of the realm, should be uninterrupted and well

regulated...Holding universal compassion towards the blind, the crippled, the diseased, the helpless, and those without any means of subsistence, the king should arrange for their means of livelihood so long as they live.' More directly referring to Shivaji, it declares : ' He regenerated the Marathas....He rescued *Dharma*, established gods and Brahmans in their places, and maintained the six-fold duties of sacrifice...according to the division of the [ four ] *varṇas*. He destroyed thieves and other criminals in the kingdom. He created a new type of administration for his territories, forts and armies, and conducted the government without hindrance, and brought it under one system of co-ordination and control. He created [ in short, wholly ] a *New Order* of things.'

As I have shown elsewhere ( *Marāthā History Re-examined* ), Shivaji's mission was not parochial ; he was no mere conqueror, or Maratha imperialist. His was the cause of Hindu freedom and Hindu civilization. His real nature is better brought out by his submission to Ramdas and Tukaram, than by any of his political adventures. Though he fought, all through his life, against the imperial domination of the Mughals, he neither hated Islam nor the Muslims, as such; he employed several of them in important services. Khwafi Khan, the contemporary Muslim historian, has testified with great candour that : ' He made it a rule that whenever his followers went plundering, they should do no harm to the mosques, the Book of God, or the women of any one. Whenever a copy of the sacred *Qurān* came into his hands, he treated it with respect, and gave it to one of his Mussalman followers. When the women of any Hindu or Mussalman were taken prisoner by his men, and they had no friend to protect them, he watched over

them, until the relations came with suitable ransom to buy their liberty.' ( E. D. vii. 256-8 ) As Sir Jadunath Sarkar has well expressed : ' Shivaji proved, by his example, that the Hindu race could build a nation, found a State, defeat its enemies ; they could conduct their own defence ; they could protect and promote literature and art, commerce and industry ; they could maintain navies and ocean-going fleets of their own, and conduct naval battles on equal terms with foreigners. He taught the modern Hindus to rise to the full stature of their growth. He demonstrated that the tree of Hinduism was not dead, and that it could put forth new leaves and branches and once again raise up its head to the skies.' ( S. T. 406 )

In a remarkable epistle addressed to Aurangzeb, Shivaji stated : ' May it please Your Majesty !

If you believe in the true Divine Book and word of God ( i. e. the *Qurān* ), you will find therein that God is styled *Rubb-ul-amin* ( the Lord of all men ), not *Rubb-ul-Musalmin*, the Lord of Muslims alone. Verily, Islam and Hinduism may be terms of contrast ; but they are diverse pigments used by the Divine Painter for blending the colours and filling in the outlines of His picture of the entire human family. If it be a mosque, the call to prayer is sounded in remembrance of Him. If it be a temple, the bell is rung in yearning for Him alone. To show bigotry towards any man's creed or religious practices is to alter the words of the Holy Book. To draw new lines on a picture is tantamount to finding fault with the Painter.'

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## CHAPTER IX

### PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

*Andham tamah praviśanti yé avidyām upāsaté,  
Tato bhūya iva té tamo ya u vidyayām ratāh.*

ĪS'OPANISAD

THIS IMPORTANT verse in the *Īsopaniṣad* (9) has been rendered by Sir S. Radhakrishnan to mean :  
In darkness are they who worship only the world, but in greater darkness they who worship the infinite alone.' It is followed by another, which is interpreted as : ' He who accepts both, saves himself from death by the knowledge of the former, and attains immortality by the knowledge of the latter.' ( H. V. L. 79-80 ) A third further declares :

*· Vidyayā vīndatē Amritam.'*

The key-words used in all these are *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* which are relative terms ; they have been popularly translated into the dichotomy of ' knowledge vs ignorance.' Outside India, knowledge has been equated with ' power ;' but for us, it means, ' power to win Immortality.' The two interpretations are, obviously, not identical. In the West, the emphasis has been laid on the knowledge of this ( physical ) world, which has led to their spectacular mastery over it. We have been on the contrary, supposed ( though wrongly ) to have been obsessed by our preoccupation with Metaphysics. If this implies, as it has been frequently made out, that we have been neglectful of the ' good things of this earthly life,' it is not true. If our philosophy may be described as ' transcendental,' it is so—not in the sense

of assigning Reality to another and an imaginary world—but in the truer sense of ‘rising above’ the limitations of the ‘merely physical.’ As the above citations from the *Īsopaniṣad* clearly indicate, even ‘metaphysics’ is as partial as ‘physics;’ both suffer from the ‘unreality’ of being ‘one-sided.’ They share equally the defects from which the seven blind men suffered in the parable of the elephant; the ‘wholeness’ of REALITY is greater than its parts, and truth lies in the perception or appreciation of relativity. As a Buddhist *Tantra* puts it :  
 ‘Let all avoid the extremes of worldly existence and selfish quiescence, attaining success in the two ends.’  
 ( I. I. C. 10 ) This is the knowledge that is said to lead to immortality :

*Vidyām cha avidyām cha yas tad védobhayam saha,  
 Avidyayā mrityum tirtvā vidyayāmritam aśnuté.*

This is the true meaning of the so-called Indian transcendentalism. Like aviators in modern times, our ancestors, however high they might have frequently soared above the earth, always returned to it, lived on it, and breathed its atmosphere like everyone else — only feeling the better for their aerial flights; for the sky-lark naturally sees more of heaven and of life than the earth-bound fowl ever can.

We saw life — to use Matthew Arnold’s expression— ‘steadily, and saw it whole.’ Our ‘other-worldliness,’ therefore, is as great a myth as our alleged ‘stay-at-home-ness.’ In addition to what we have cited already, as evidence of our positive attitude towards life, we will give here more convincing proof of how much we cared for our existence on earth, and what we did to make it happy and prosperous, without ignoring the higher values that have given our civilization a distinctive importance. Of the four *Puruṣārthas*—*Dharma*,

*Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*—we have so far examined the nature of the first two. It is the misconception about the last that has given rise to the erroneous impression of the Hindu's neglect of 'the cash-in-hand' while fixing his gaze too much on 'postdated cheques.' We cannot too often stress, therefore, the simple fact that the vast majority, at any rate, were not expected to reach the last stage in life's journey without covering the earlier three. *Mokṣa* was only the culmination in the fulfilment of life's total purposes; it was not a free gift from God, but a state which had to be attained by ceaseless pursuit. The price for it had to be paid through complete living and the full discharge of life's obligations. This was at the root of the 'budgeting' of the 'hundred years' in terms of the four *Āśramas*: *brahmacharya*, *grihastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*. The first combined 'Spartan discipline with Athenian idealism'; the second was not less pragmatic than the European, with the added American flavour of the zest for living; the third was at once 'retirement' and 'preparation'—a furlough involving 'a pension and a probation'; while the last was the life of 'the Good Shepherd' whose duty it was to serve his flock and minister to its sorest needs. Then and then alone, could one exclaim with Bhartrihari :

*Mātar medini tāta māruta sakhe' tejah śubandho jala,*  
*Bhrātar vyoma nibaddha éva bhavatām antyah pranāmanjaliḥ;*  
*Yuṣmat-saṅga-vasopajātasukritodrekasphuran-nirmala-*  
*Dnānāpāsta-samasta-mohāmahimā leeye parabrahmaṇi.*

( V. S. 100 )

Oh Earth, my mother! Oh wind, my father! Oh fire. my friend! Oh water, my good relative! Oh sky, my brother! Here is my last salutation to you with clasped hands! Having cast away infatuation with its wonderful



power, by means of an amplitude of pure knowledge, resplendent with merits, developed through my association with you all, I now merge in the Supreme Brahman !'

It is well to remember that this is the last verse of the *S'ataka-trayi*; its author had already lived through all that life could offer; the *S'ringāra S'ataka* and *Nīti-S'ataka* had been composed out of life's substance, before the *Vairāgya-S'ataka* was written. This was in the spirit of the vedic injunction :

*Kurvanneveha karmāṇi jīveviṣetsatam samāh.  
Evam tvayi nānyathetosti na karma lipyate' nare'.*  
( Y. V. 40. 2 )

' In the midst of activity alone wilt thou desire to live a hundred years; this is the only way, there is no other. From work no sin accrues to man.' Hence the *Rig-Veda* enjoins :

*Pibatam cha triṣṇutam chā cha gachhatam  
Prajām cha dhattam draviṇam cha dhattam.*  
( R. V. 8. 35. 10 )  
*Jayatam cha pra stutam cha pra chāvatam  
Prajām cha dhattam draviṇam cha dhattam.*  
( ibid. 11 )

' Drink, be satisfied, go on, and work for the people and prosperity [ wealth ]; conquer, protect the praiseworthy, and contribute to the welfare of the people.' This is neither hedonistic nor ' other-worldly.' The *bete noire* of the Indian mind has been considered to be the dread of *samsāra*, and the remedy sought by it to be *Mokṣa* : *Nirvāṇa* is another word for this ' paradise of the escapist.' But what we have seen of Indian life and civilization, so far, affords no ground on which to base such a conclusion. No other community in India ever tried to carry the antithesis between matter and spirit so much

to its logical end as the Digambar Jains. They conceived of the superiority of the soul over the body, and sacrificed the latter at the altar of the Spirit, through the practice of *Sullekhana* or *Samādhī-marāṇa* or *Prāyopaveśa*, i. e. slow starvation unto death; and to what purpose? For the attainment of *Nirvāṇa*. But, even here, a closer examination of their history will reveal the fact that comparatively a very small number actually liquidated themselves in that manner. Had it been the universal rule, or even if the majority had sought to act up to it, Jain contributions to art and literature would have been nil. As a matter of fact, however, they have been very large and important. To enter into a fuller discussion on this subject would be too great a digression; besides, I have done it in another book (*Jainism and Karnatak Culture*). We shall content ourselves here with only a quotation or two from it:

In order to realize the nature of the Jain ideal one has only to stand within one of their richly carved temples, or gaze at the countenances of their great colossi, lost in the exuberance of peace and contemplation. Their mythology and their literature penetrate the utmost depths and variety of human thought and imagination. Their ethical ideal reaches the boundaries of theoretical perfection. The supreme goal of their life is to be perfect as the *Arhat* or *Jina* or *Tīrthāṅkara* is perfect: literally, the Deserving, the Conqueror, the Founder of the Path across the Ford: perfect in the triple way of Right Faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct. Indeed, the harmonious combination of these three—each in its fullest development—is the supreme ideal to be attained; and this ideal is attainable by all, including the lowest forms of life and existence. Failure in one form of existence is only a stepping-stone to another, in which to set right the mistakes and resume the lost path. No one, however low or fallen, is doomed; all have salvation. What could be

more optimistic, or more dynamically so in its outlook?  
( 175 )

This, we have seen, is also the teaching of the *Gītā* and of Buddhism. The *Pañchāstikāya-sāra* of the great South Indian Jain teacher, Kundakundacharya, defines *Mokṣa* as follows :—

‘ Unlimited perception and knowledge are always associated with *Jīva*, and spotless conduct born of these leads to *Mokṣa*. *Jīva* is the architect of its own form of existence : it is the doer and enjoyer of its own karma... *Atma*, becoming omniscient and all-perceiving, through its own effort, obtains the infinite bliss which transcends sense-experience, which is free from any imperfection, which is spiritual and self-determined. ’ ( *Gāthās* 27-9, 161 )

The elaborate conditions and rules laid down for the practice of *Sallekhana* would seem to make it impossible for any but the rarest to think of it. Besides, it was prescribed only for specific cases of individuals. Says Samantabhadra—

*Upasargé durbhikṣé jarasi rujāyām cha nihpratikāre*  
*Dharmāya tanuvimochanam āhuh sallekhanam āryāh.*  
( E. C. 83 n. 4 )

The *raison d'être* of this is stated thus in the *Uttarādhyayana-Sūtra* :

‘ Death, willing or unwilling ( under such circumstances ) is inevitable ; the latter belongs to helpless fools : the former is called *Pandita-marana* or death according to wise men. ’ ( v. 20-4 )

Whether one agrees with this argument or not, the Jains followed it with the logic of the Indian Alcestes who became *sati*, or in the spirit of the Japanese committing *hara-kiri*. At its worst, the victim was oneself and not some one else, as in the case of, say, vivisection or the preparation of vaccines. But, when all is said, for or against it, the number of persons going



**FRIEZE OF DANCERS: MT ABU**



to such excesses was exceedingly small. The vast majority followed quite a different rule.

Among the Brahmanical Hindus, who followed the *Varṇāśrama*, again, the number of people who pursued metaphysics, or *Adhyātma Vidyā* for its own sake, was equally limited. It was not followed even by all Brahmanas; because many of them were, in all times, devoted to worldly avocations. We have thus a Dronacharya teaching archery, a Parashurama becoming a warrior, and a Vishnugupta (Chanakya or Kautilya) writing on *Danda-nīti*. An overwhelming section of Hindu Society always carried on the multifarious activities of *samsāra* without being untrue to the best teachings of their spiritual preceptors. This is how they came to build up a Greater India, literally as well as metaphorically. Let us recount a few illustrations.

A people who considered the human body as an evil, to be liquidated by all possible means, may not be expected also to cherish and nurse it, at the same time, by the pursuit of Medicine and Surgery, as the Hindus undoubtedly did. We have noted that Asoka and Jayavarman—to mention only the most outstanding examples—built hospitals very carefully equipped, not only for the service of man but, sometimes, also for ailing animals. Medicine was the one branch of science wherein the Hindus were least influenced by foreigners. Strabo observed that the Indians ‘made no accurate study of the sciences, *except that of medicine*.’ According to a modern estimate, ‘there is nothing in Indian medical texts which might suggest Greek influence.’ (L. I. 353) Sir W. Hunter was positive in stating that ‘Indian medicine dealt with the whole area of the science. It described the structure of the body, its organs, ligaments, muscles, vessels and tissues. The

Materia Medica of the Hindus embraces a vast collection of drugs belonging to the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, many of which have now been adopted by European physicians. Their pharmacy contained ingenious processes of preparation, with elaborate directions for the administration and classification of medicines. Much attention was devoted to hygiene, regimen of the body, and diet. '

He was equally certain about the Surgery of the ancient Indian being ' bold and skilful. '

' They conducted amputations,' he writes, ' arresting the bleeding by pressure with a cup-shaped bandage and boiling oil; practised lithotomy; performed operations in the abdomen and uterus; cured hernia, fistula, piles; set broken bones and dislocations; and were dexterous in the extraction of foreign substances from the body. A special branch of surgery was devoted to rhinoplasty, or operation for improving deformed ears and noses and forming new ones—a useful operation which European surgeons have now borrowed. The ancient Indian surgeons also mention a cure for neuralgia, analogous to the modern cutting of the fifth nerve above the eyebrow. They devoted great care to the making of surgical instruments and to the training of students by means of operations performed on wax, spread on a board, or on the tissues and cells of the vegetable kingdom, and upon dead animals. They were expert in midwifery, not shrinking from the most critical operations, and in the diseases of women and children. Their practice of physic embraced the classification, causes, symptoms and treatment of diseases, diagnosis and prognosis. Considerable advances were also made in veterinary science, and monographs exist on the diseases of horses, elephants, etc. ' ( H. S. 254-6 )



The earliest Buddhist books frequently allude to the surgical operations performed by the famous surgeon Jivaka. The *Artha-S'āstra* also mentions various classes of physicians and surgeons, midwives and nurses, bandages and ointments, surgical instruments and other appliances. The *Charaka-Saṃhitā* on medicine, and Sushruta on surgery are well known. The latter describes no fewer than 120 surgical instruments, and a large number of surgical operations. 'No accurate account of any part of the body,' Sushruta states, 'including even the skin, can be rendered without a knowledge of anatomy; hence, any one who wishes to acquire a thorough knowledge of anatomy, must prepare a dead body and carefully examine all its parts. For it is only by combining, both direct ocular observation and the information of text-books, that thorough knowledge is obtained.' Similarly, Charaka, like Hippocrates, enjoins upon the physician high and noble standards in the pursuit of his avocation: 'Not for money, nor for any earthly object, should one treat his patients: in this the physician's work excels all other vocations. Those who sell treatment, as an article of trade, neglect the true treasure of gold in search of mere dust.' He stipulates: 'You should seek the happiness of all beings: every day, standing or sitting you should try to heal the sick, with your whole heart. You should not demand too much from your patients, even to maintain yourself. You should not touch another man's wife, even in thought, nor hanker after the wealth of others. You should be sober in dress, and temperate in your habits; you must not commit any sin, nor be an abettor of it. You must speak words that are gentle, clean and righteous.' No wonder a people who lived clean lives and expected moral conduct even from

artists and craftsman, as we have seen, laid down these standards for their physicians and surgeons too.

Another astounding piece of evidence of the pursuit of 'the good things of life' by the ancient Indians is provided by their *Kāma-śāstra*. Setting aside all prudery, which generally characterizes conservative societies regarding such subjects, Vatsayana in his *Kāma-sūtra*, writes with a frankness that might prove startling to sophisticated readers, even in modern times. But it was one of the *Puruṣārthas*, not to be neglected, and was thus accepted as an essential part of life, and treated accordingly.

*Rakṣandharmārthakāmānām sthitim svam lokavartinim,  
Asya śāstrasya tatvadño bhavatyeva jitendriyah.*

'He who will properly master the secrets of this Science, will, doing adequate justice to the remaining three of the *Puruṣārthas*, become *Jitendriya* or conqueror of the senses.' Living life fully does one transcend it; hence Vatsayana says: 'One who does not efficiently realize each of the *Puruṣārthas*, lives in vain!'

Civilization, according to Rabindranath Tagore, is a kind of mould that each nation is busy making for itself to shape its men and women according to its best ideals. 'All its institutions, its legislature, its standard of approbation and condemnation, its conscious and unconscious teachings tend towards that object.' (*Sādhana*, 13) Educational institutions may be regarded as by far the best illustrations of the objectives consciously and deliberately worked for by any people. Let us see what our ancestors did in this important matter; for that would provide us with a very reliable mirror in which to find their real outlook on Life. There were two agencies which imparted education:

the academic Universities and professional Master-craftsmen. It is obvious that the latter were severely practical, and the apprentices received their instruction through actual *doing*. If there was any scope for theorizing, it was largely in Universities like Benares, Taxila, Nalanda and Vikramasila. Though they were cosmopolitan in the admission of students, they also represented the intellectual classes. Yet their courses were not confined to the teaching of metaphysical subjects only ; as often, they provided for the study of secular subjects like medicine, astronomy, mathematics, grammar, and logic ; they also taught arts like music and dancing, painting and the *śilpa-śāstras*, all of which were calculated to contribute to success in this life. *Brahma-Vidyā* and religious or philosophical lore must have attracted only a very small section of students. The majority went there in order to fit themselves for the life from which they were drawn. Indian society was not a community of philosophers alone ; barring a few exceptions, it was composed of men in the ordinary business of life. How rich and variegated that life was has been amply demonstrated in these pages. Our entire secular history, therefore, is a running commentary on the “ profane ” aspects of our civilization. Even when educational foundations were connected with temples, they also provided for the teaching of subjects like chemistry, metallurgy, etc., as evidenced in an epigraphic record from Nellore ( L. G. 282-83 ).

Highly controversial as the subject of Hindu achievements in the Positive Sciences may be, we will touch upon some of its least contested aspects, if only as further proof of our mundane interests and accomplishments. It is irrelevant for us to establish whether we were lenders or borrowers in respect of certain depart-

ments of knowledge ; what is really of material importance to our argument is that we were interested in them deeply enough to have acquired remarkable proficiency. Of this we have plenty of incontrovertible evidence. In some of these lines, of course, we hold the record for originality, unchallenged by any. The scientific study of language—the basic instrument of all knowledge and communication—is one of them. Sanskrit proudly bears the name of *Gīrvāṇa-bhāṣā*, or ‘the language of Gods;’ literally it means the ‘cultured’ or ‘cultivated.’ Speaking of its grammar, Max Muller said that there is no more comprehensive collection and classification of all the facts of a language than we find in Panini’s *Sūtras*. ( L. O. R. ch. iii ) It contains some 4000 aphorisms composed about the 4th century B. C.

Walter E. Clark writes in *The Legacy of India* :

‘ Pānini’s grammar is the earliest scientific grammar in the world, the earliest extant grammar of any language, and one of the greatest ever written. It was the discovery of Sanskrit by the West, at the end of the eighteenth century, and the study of Indian methods of analysing language that revolutionized our study of language and grammar, and gave rise to our science of comparative philology. The most striking feature of Sanskrit grammar is its objective resolution of speech and language into their component elements, and definition of the functions of these elements. Long before Panini ( who names over sixty predecessors ) the sounds represented by the letters of the alphabet had been arranged in an orderly systematic form, vowels and diphthongs separated from mutes, semi-vowels, and sibilants, and the sounds in each group arranged according to places in the mouth where produced ( guttūrals, palatals, cerebrals, dentals, and labials ). Words were analysed into roots out of which complex words grew by the addition of prefixes and suffixes. General rules were worked out, defining the conditions

according to which consonants and vowels influence each other, undergo change, or drop out. The study of language in India was much more objective and scientific than in Greece or Rome. The interest was in empirical investigation of language, rather than in philosophical theories about it. Greek grammar tended to be logical, philosophical and syntactical. Indian study of language was as objective as the dissection of a body by an anatomist.' ( pp. 339-40 )

It would be very strange, the writer adds, if this analytical and empirical spirit had been confined entirely to the study of language. There are reasons for believing that it extended to other matters as well. An exaggerated idea of the part played by religion and philosophy, he further says, in the life of ancient India, has led to the neglect of Indian *realieu* : ' But we know that there was in ancient India a large amount of literature dealing with the practical affairs of life, with technical arts and crafts, and with specific sciences.....A people which was capable of making the Iron Pillar of Delhi and the Sultanganj copper colossus of Buddha, and of hewing out blocks of sandstone 50 ft long and 4 ft square, carving them into a perfect roundness, giving them a wonderful polish, which cannot be duplicated today, and transporting them over distances of several hundred miles, must have attained considerable proficiency in metallurgy and engineering.' ( ib. 335 ff )

The Iron Pillar, above referred to, is 23 ft 8 ins in height and its diameter is 16.4 ins at the base, and 12.50 ins at the top. The material used is pure rustless malleable iron, which has stood the tests of time and weather in its exposed condition during several centuries. The Sultanganj colossus is made of copper, cast in two layers over an inner core, ' by a sort of *cire per du*

process,' and is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  ft high, weighing about one ton. Other works of great magnitude, like the pillars of Asoka and the Jain colossi, exist in the country. Two of the former class were transplanted in the vicinity of Delhi, as late as the 14th century A. D. in the reign of Firuz Shah Tughlaq. They were brought over considerable distances, from Topra—in the Ambala district—and Meerut. The heights of the Asoka monolithic pillars vary from forty to fifty feet and have a diameter of  $35\frac{1}{2}$  to  $49\frac{1}{2}$  inches at the base, and 22 to 35 inches at the top. Their average weight has been estimated at 50 tons. It is interesting to note that Afif, a contemporary Muslim chronicler, states :

‘ A number of large boats had been collected, some of which could carry 5000–7000 maunds of grain, and the least of them 2000 maunds. The column was very ingeniously transferred to these boats, and was then conducted to Firuzabad, where it was landed and conveyed into Kushk with infinite labour and skill.’ (C. I. 143)

Indeed, Afif has, in all this, told us nothing more than the naive folk-songs of South Kanara which tell of the raising of the Gomata colossi—of heights equal to the Asoka pillars but, in thickness, of about three times their average diameter :—

‘ “ You people, bring 50 coconuts in a basket and betel-nut on a fan; call together the 5000 people of Kārkala, and raise the Gomataswāmi ”, he said; but they could not do it. “ Very well,” said Kalkudā (the devil), and he put the left hand under the Gomata and raised it, and placed it on a base; and then he set the Gomata upright. ’ (J.K.C. 107)

These colossi are installed on hillocks—in Karkala and Sravana Belgola—of considerable heights. ‘ The task of carving a rock in its place, had it been twice its size,’ Fergusson has observed, ‘ the Hindu mind never would



have shrunk from ; but to move such a mass up the steep smooth side of the hill seems labour beyond their power.' Yet facts are at times stranger than fiction, and the task was accomplished, and more than once !

The technical skill implied in all this has been displayed in many other forms also. The monolithic Kailas temple of Ellora, with its stupendous sculptures, is a marvel of engineering, unsurpassed by any in the world ; even its Mahayana replica found in Java ( which has been referred to before ) was executed by Indian architects. The Kailas ( very closely resembling in its outlines the Everest Peak, as Havell has demonstrated ) has been scooped out of a hill, and stands four-square in a court-yard hewn from solid rock, complete with gateways, nandi-pavilion, stair-cases on either side, porches and subsidiary shrines—formed by the chisel, and sculptured from top to bottom without fault ! ( Codrington, in L. I. ) The central structure of this great temple is 96 ft high, 109 ft broad, and 164 ft long. ' The walls and roof of solid rock are lavishly carved inside and out. In the spacious court-yard surrounding the monolithic temple stand majestic pillars, life-size elephants, and images of gods and goddesses, each separately carved from masses of rock left for the purpose in appropriate places. No one can behold the harmonious effect produced, without marvelling at the ingenuity of the men who executed them.' ( St Nihal Singh )

In quite another sphere, but no less marvellous, are the frescoes of Ajanta, assigned by V. A. Smith to the Vakataka-Chalukya period ( c 550-642 A. D. ). Exquisite as their artistic character is, we will here confine ourselves only to the scientific and technical aspects of their execution. Principal Griffiths of the J. J. School of Art, Bombay, spent no less than thirteen years, on



the spot, carefully studying them. 'It may be impertinent again to point out,' he observes, 'the exceeding simplicity of the Indian and Egyptian methods which have ensured a durability denied to more recent attempts executed with all the aids of modern chemical science.' (F. A. 95) These colours have not merely endured during nearly 1500 years, mostly of utter neglect and of exposure to the worst ravages of nature, but, in places, look delightfully fresh ! And, these too are a further illustration of the secular setting of the religious in India. Even the austere Buddhist monks liked to surround themselves with the exquisite works of art displayed by these frescoes. According to Codrington, a competent authority on such matters, the caves were, in form, not originally ecclesiastical but, undoubtedly, derived from the apsidal halls of the secular communities and guilds, which play so prominent a part in the early Buddhist literature. (L. I. 86)

If we proceed with this investigation, we shall come across vistas in unexpected directions. But, from what we have so far seen, almost nothing should come as a surprise to the student of Indian civilization. For instance, the vast intercourse with the far-flung world across the seas could not have been carried on without the aid of a corresponding ship-building industry. This is no longer a mere inference, but a well-established fact, especially after the publication of Prof Radhakumud Mookerji's history of Indian Shipping which has brought to light much valuable information. Starting with the earliest times of which we have any kind of record, he has drawn his interesting material from literature, from art (especially painting and sculpture), from epigraphy and even numismatics. He deals with all ages, covering the Ancient, Medieval

and later periods. The pictorial illustrations, which he has with great pains garnered, constitute in themselves a very valuable contribution. They built daintily furnished pleasure-boats, as well as ocean-going heavy freighters and sturdy fighting vessels, noted for their speed and manoeuvrability. Their tonnage, often including horses and elephants, reached up to a maximum of 1,000 tons. Rules are laid down in books on the subject prescribing the kind and quality of wood to be used for the different parts, as well as varieties of ships. Timber is quaintly classified into '*Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Sūdra*' according to its lightness, strength, durability, weight, and so on. The use of iron was discouraged in the bottoms of ships, because 'there were magnetic rocks under the ocean.' Birds were trained to serve as *matsya-yantra* or mariner's compass, to determine the direction, as well as to detect the approach of land, as Columbus did on his historic voyage. There was also a special coinage for use by mariners, bearing the design of ships on them. Nor was the artistic side of ship-building neglected, as the available illustrations fully bear out. European witnesses in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, like Nicolo Conti and Varthema, have left accounts of their observations on some of the special features of ship-construction in India. Varthema, for instance, states: 'First they make their vessels, such as are open, each of 300 or 400 butts; and when they build the said vessels, they do not put any oakum between one plank and another, in any way whatever, but they join the planks so well that they keep out the water most excellently...They also possess as good timbers as ourselves, and greater quantities than with us.... They carry two sails where we carry only one. (I. S. 203) Conti refers to ships being constructed in com-

partments, so that, if any one of them was damaged by storm, the rest of the ship might remain intact and continue the voyage uninterrupted. 'The natives of India,' he writes, 'build some ships larger than ours, capable of containing 2000 butts, and with five sails and with as many masts; the lower part is constructed with triple planks, in order to withstand the force of the tempests, to which they are much exposed. But some ships are so built in compartments that, should one part be shattered, the other portion, remaining entire, may accomplish the voyage. ( I. F. C. 27 )

That this important national industry, by means of which we maintained our vital contacts with the outside world, was still alive in the beginning of the 19th century, may be gathered from the remarks of Lt Col A. Walker, quoted by Dr Mookerji, and made in 1811: 'It is calculated that every ship in the Navy of Great Britain is renewed every twelve years. It is well known that teakwood-built ships last fifty years and upwards. Many ships Bombay-built, after running fourteen or fifteen years, have been brought into the Navy, and were considered as strong as ever. The "Sir Edward Hughes" performed, I believe, eight voyages as an Indiaman, before she was purchased for the Navy. No European-built Indiaman is capable of going more than six voyages with safety....Ships built at Bombay are also executed one-fourth cheaper than in the docks of England, so that for the English-built ships (requiring to be renewed every twelve years) the expense is quadruple.' ( I. S. 240-47 )

*Indeed, Freedom is ever the first thing to depart ; when Freedom is lost, everything else goes with it !*

Early in the tenth century A. D. the sagacious Al Beruni observed: 'The number of sciences in India

is great, and it might still be greater, if the public mind is directed towards them, at such times as they are in the ascendancy and in general favour with all, when people not only honour Science itself, but also its representatives. To do this, in the first instance, is the duty of those who rule over them—of kings and princes; for they alone can free the minds of scholars from the daily anxieties for the necessities of life, and stimulate their energies to earn more fame and favour, the yearning for which is the pith and marrow of human nature. The present times, however, are not of this kind; they are the very opposite, and therefore, it is quite impossible that a new science or any new kind of research should arise in our days. What we have of sciences is nothing but the scanty remains of bygone better times.' ( A. I. 152 )

When kings were themselves interested in such avocations, however unpropitious the times, they could work wonders. National genius never completely dies out. An eminent illustration of this is found in the achievements of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur. He lived during the anarchical period which followed the death of Aurangzeb, and was called upon by the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah to serve as governor over Agra and Malwa in succession. He had to relinquish the latter *subah* to the Peshwa in 1734. But in the midst of all this, Jai Singh found time and opportunity to build his celebrated astronomical observatories at Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Ujjain, Muttra and Benares. Besides these, he also set a model of town-planning by the foundation of Jaipur ( the 'Paris of India' ) which he build according to the ancient Indian principles laid down in the *S'ilpa-S'āstras*, already illustrated in Mohenjo-daro ( which of course was not known to Jai Singh ).

Despite the exclusiveness of the Hindus of his generation, Al Beruni noted that their ancestors were more open-minded, as evidenced by Varahamihira's appreciation of the Greek accomplishments in science (cited earlier). In fact, Varahamihira was himself quoting Garga before him. Jai Singh too was eclectic like Akbar, and like Akbar sent missions to Europe in order to ascertain European contributions to the subject of his own special interest and investigation. But those emissaries could not report to him, as Kaye has noted, until after Jai Singh had already built his Observatories. Jai Singh died in 1743. Of him Kaye has written : 'Considering the state of the country in which Jai Singh lived, the political anarchy of his time, the ignorance of his contemporaries, and the difficulties in the way of transmission of knowledge, his scheme of astronomical work was a notable one, and his Observatories still form noble monuments of a remarkable personality.' ( A. O. J. S. 90 )

Jaipur is better visited and seen than described in words. But the principles of its lay-out are contained in our ancient *S'ūlpa-S'āstras* like the *Mānasāra*, for instance. They prescribed 5 *dandas* or 40 ft as the desirable width for the main streets; the others varying from eight to forty feet. They, likewise, mention standard sizes of cottages, houses, and the heights of storeys, their permissible number, the rules for the construction of squares or blocks of houses, the ideal sites for the location of school-buildings, temples, and the like, as well as other practical details regarding the quality of the ground, from the point of view of sanitation, foundation, security, etc. To admit of free ventilation and sunlight, the streets were to run East to West and North to South ; and the buildings in the

same line or street to be of the same height. ' Buildings of the same number of storeys should also correspond in height. The front, middle, and back doors of a house should be on the same level, and in a straight line with each other.' Forty different types of villages and towns are described, varying from 4,000 square-feet in area to nearly 30 square miles. ( M. A. chs. i-ii )

INDIA is alive, has been alive even through the torpor of her subjection, and will be much more alive with the return of Freedom. Her vitality is more often expressed through her untutored sons, than through those who have passed through the mills of officially recognized institutions. Rabindranath Tagore, acknowledged ' truant ' from school, demonstrated that real genius does not wait upon formal training. Akbar, Shivaji and Ranjit Singh are historical illustrations of the so-called ' illiterates ' who never suffered from any ' schooling. ' Though Jai Singh could express his mathematical genius unhampered by social circumstances, he was after all a Prince, and therefore, to that extent, his own master. Even Tagore was born an aristocrat, with more than a silver spoon in his mouth. But ' slow rises worth by poverty depressed, ' says the poet ; how true in many cases that one can think of. Yet are there examples to the contrary ; they are, verily, the instruments through whom the race reveals the fact of its inherent vitality. Among such was Srinivasa Ramanujan, the son of a cloth-merchant's clerk, born at Erode in 1887, who could not pass the First Arts Examination of an Indian University, and who, up to his sixteenth year, had never seen a book of mathematics of any higher class, and still turned out to be a mathematical prodigy, called by a Cambridge ' Sadleirian Professor of Pure Mathematics ' ( G. H. Hardy ) as " no inspired idiot, or



a psychological freak, but a rational human being who happened to be a great mathematician." Though he was cradled in poverty and rejected by his examiners in the very first test of the University, and had to serve as a mere clerk in the office of the Port Trust of Madras, until he was twenty-five years of age, he was born of the race that had produced 'the inventors of the numerical figures with which the whole world reckons, and of the decimal system connected with the use of those figures...the greatest calculators of antiquity, the creators of the Vedic *S'ulva Sūtras*, who attained the greatest eminence in algebra which they developed to a degree beyond anything ever achieved by the Greeks,' the race of Aryabhatta, of Varahamihira who maintained that the earth rotates on its own axis and explained the true causes of the eclipses of the sun and moon (in the 6th century A. D. ) and of Brahmagupta who wrote his *Brahmasphuta Siddhānta* when he was only thirty years of age, and of Bhaskaracharya and Leelavati. ( I. G. I. 265-6 ) Of the work of Ramanujan, Prof Hardy has said, 'One gift it shows which no one can deny, profound and invincible originality.... The College at Kumbakonam rejected the one great man they had ever possessed, and the loss was irreparable ; it is the worst instance of the damage that wanted £ 60 a year for five years, occasional contact with almost anyone who had any knowledge and a little imagination, for the world to have gained another of its greatest mathematicians.' ( *Ramanujan*, p. 7 )



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## CHAPTER X

### BACKWARD OR FORWARD ?

*Last of innumerable morns departed,  
First of bright morns to come, has Dawn arisen :  
Dispelling foes, observer of World Order.  
We, living men, look upon her shining :  
Men lying on the ground she wakes to action.  
Arise ! The Vital breath again has reached us ;  
Darkness has gone away and Light is coming !*

RIG VEDA

**S**UCH WAS the feeling of freshness which our Vedic forebears felt in the Dawn of our civilization. A proper sense of perspectives or relativity, we have noted, has been the key-note of the Indian outlook. The Vedic seer, therefore, found in *Uṣas* only the 'first of endless Dawns hereafter,' and also declared: 'Morning and Night clash not, nor do they tarry.' The cyclic character of our existence was later on expressed by our cosmogonists in terms of the endless succession of the *Yugas* : *Krita*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali*.

Akin, immortal, following each other,  
Morning and Night fare on, exchanging colours.

Metaphysically, this phenomenon was translated into the cycle of Life and Death : 'For whatever is born is bound to die, and whatever dies is sure to be born again.' ( *Gītā*, ii. 27 )

This law is equally applicable to the mutations of our history : there have been in it periods of progress and periods of decline. No nation can escape from these vicissitudes of human existence. But, through all this ebb and flow of life, we have always held fast to the

belief in Immortality. Without such faith in Eternal Life, our optimism could not have survived. The antithesis of this attitude is found illustrated in the history of ancient Egypt: they appeared to be obsessed with the thought of Death and left behind them only shrivelled mummies to commemorate them. Their civilization was buried under their pyramids. Our ancestors, on the other hand, held a more balanced view of life, and we have continued to be very much alive to this day. We never ignored the material side of life, but always tried to live with an understanding of its limitations. This comprehensive attitude was well expressed by the spacious word DHARMA. It also meant the wise subordination of the purely material to the spiritual principle. The crisis and the tragedy of modern civilization has been due to the reversing of this order. The way to restore the rhythm of life is to re-learn the significance of our precious Heritage. Though this might appear like looking 'backward,' its correct comprehension must necessarily inspire us with confidence in marching vigorously 'forward.'

A study of the Indian Renaissance, since the last century, will show that we, in this country, have not lost our ancient bearings, and that we are still on the right track. The fact that we have today a personality like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at the helm of affairs is an encouraging certitude. For he combines in himself a modern brain with an ancient heart. As his work already referred to has shown, he has not ceased looking 'backward' while unhesitatingly moving 'forward.' Mahatma Gandhi has been the link between him and ancient India. This has become possible because of the essentially activist outlook of both. Inspired by the best ideals of the past, they have

kept pace with the moving world. In politics, they have worked hand-in-hand for the achievement of *Swaraj*; in social matters, they have been radical reformers. In their personal beliefs they might differ from each other, as regards details, but their spiritual roots are identical; they derive sustenance from the soil of India. They have both a deep sense of our national heritage. In history we have witnessed such a combination more than once during its great creative epochs. Asoka and Buddha were 'spiritual contemporaries,' though chronologically they were separated. Shivaji and Ramdas lived and worked together. So did Vidyaranya and the founders of the great Vijayanagara empire. Though in each case, their outer expression was conditioned and coloured by the atmosphere of their respective ages, inwardly, they were all sustainers and rejuvenators of our national *Dharma*.

During the nineteenth century, once again, we have the combination of Sri Ramakrishna with Vivekananda. We know of no other country where leaders have appeared in such conjunction. The nearest approach is, that of Mazzini and Garibaldi in the Italian *risorgimento*; but there is little in common between the Italian Prophet of Nationalism and Mahatma Gandhi. Nor does Nehru resemble Garibaldi in anything except his burning patriotism and courage. In India, we have, repeatedly, this unique combination of men of intuition with men of intellect, and men of thought with men of action. Their genealogy goes back to Vasishta and Sri Ramachandra, Sri Krishna and Arjuna. Indeed, as the *Gītā* puts it : ' Whenever there is a decline of *Dharma* and *Adharma* is in the ascendant, I incarnate myself for the protection of the good and the destruction of the wicked. I appear from age to age, for the rehabilitation

of *Dharma*.’ (iv. 7-8) If this is understood in the spirit, if not in the orthodox letter, the assurance is applicable to all times including our own. It is equally true of all countries, not only of India. For Prophets and Saviours have appeared all over the world, and among all peoples, under such circumstances. Their common task everywhere has been that of ‘*loka-saṃgraha*’ or reorganization of humanity. The lives of such leaders have also been full of activity, even when they appeared to be mystics and men of religion. The *Gītā* as *karma-yoga-śāstra* contains the quintessence of their philosophy. It has been the Bible of the most orthodox, as well as the most revolutionary in India. But it is itself based on the teaching of the *Upanishads* which have inspired the prophets of Renascent India, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore.

The conversion of the strident atheist Narendranath Dutt by Sri Ramakrishna, the saint of Dakshineswar, is a remarkable illustration of the triumph of the spiritual over the materialistic urge. ‘The disciple whose task it was to take up the spiritual heritage of Sri Ramakrishna and disseminate the grain of his thought throughout the world,’ observes Romain Rolland, ‘was both physically and morally his direct antithesis.’ But the result was that all his powers and all his desires were thrown into the mission of human service, and united into one single flame: A religion which will give us faith in ourselves, a national self-respect and the power to feed and educate the poor and relieve the misery around us... If you want to find God, serve man.’

Swami Vivekananda’s visit to America served to reinforce his *Vedānta* with the pragmatic philosophy of the West. His galvanizing activities, after his return

home, might be considered to have been the fruit of that synthesis. To his Western disciples, like Margaret Elizabeth Noble — Sister Nivedita — his advice was : ‘ You have to set yourself to Hinduise your thoughts, your needs, your conceptions and habits. ’ To his Indian followers, on the other hand, he declared : ‘ Do not seek personal *Mukti* merely, but come out into the world and find salvation in its service. The abstract *Advaita* must become an active faith, permeating every-day life ; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms ; and out of bewildering *yojism* must come the most scientific and practical psychology — and all this must be put in a form so that a child may understand it. ’ Referring to some of our half-baked ‘ occultisms ’ and ‘ esotericisms ’ he cried out : ‘ Give up these weakening mysticisms and be strong. Go back to your *Upanishads* — the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy—and part from all these mysterious things—all these weakening things. ’

The principles of *Vedānta* were to be applied to the uplift of the masses. The masses must be our gods : ‘ The first gods we have to worship are our own countrymen, ’ he said : ‘ Him I call a *Mahātman* whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a *durātman*. I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any use, until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for. They pay for our education, they build our temples, but in return they get only kicks. They are practically ourselves. If we want to rejuvenate India, we must work for them. So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor, who, having been educated at their expense, pays not

the least heed to them. Close your lips and open your hearts. Work out the salvation of your land, each of you thinking that the entire burden is on your shoulders. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, granite wills that nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the Universe. Even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean, and meeting death face to face, that is what we want, and that can only be created, established and strengthened by understanding, and realizing, the ideal of *Advaita*—that ideal of the oneness of all. And let me tell you, we want strength, every time strength, and the *Upanishads* are a great mine of strength. Therein lies power to invigorate the whole world...They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, the down-trodden of all races, all creeds and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free ; freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom, are the watch-words of the *Upanishads*. The truths of the *Upanishads* are before you ; take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand. '

How much of this invigorating thought he owed to Sri Ramakrishna, the saint, has also been explicitly stated by Vivekananda : 'The time was ripe for one to be born, who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive heart of Chaitanya ; one who would be the embodiment of both this head and heart...Such a man was born in Sri Ramakrishna. His life was a thousandfold more than his teaching, a living commentary on the texts of the *Upanishads* ; nay, he was the spirit of the *Upanishads* living in human form. Nowhere else exists in this world that unique perfection, that wonderful kindness for all, which does not stop to justify itself, that intense



sympathy for man in bondage. He lived to root out all distinction between man and woman, the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, the Brahmanas and the Chandalas. He was the harbinger of peace: and the separation between the Hindus and Muhammadans, between Hindus and Christians, is to be a thing of the past. He came to bring about the synthesis of the Eastern and Western civilizations. '

How this ancient spirit is being sought to be translated into active service of humanity may be illustrated by reference to the organization and working of the Ramakrishna Mission and Order of Monks: 'The Trustees of the Belur Math,' states their report, 'among other things, look after the spiritual training, growth and the consolidation of the Ramakrishna order of Monks; and start, guide and control, branch monasteries as training grounds of the members of the Order at various suitable places; while the Ramakrishna Mission does different types of social service work, including temporary relief measures during floods, famines, earthquakes, epidemics, and other such occasional calamities, as well as regular and continuous charitable, missionary and educational measures through permanent institutions, in the shape of hospitals, dispensaries, maternity and child-welfare centres, preaching centres, orphanages, industrial schools, residential high-schools and primary schools—both for boys and girls—hostels for school and college students, as well as arrangements for part-time cultural training and peripatetic teaching for the masses.' ( C.H.I. ii. 610 )

Great and noble as this work is, it has not been confined to the Ramakrishna Mission and Order only; the stream has been flowing through other channels as well, and fertilizing the national soil of India. Not

the least important and valuable examples, significantly enough, are to be found in the field of education. ' We have undertaken this work of popular education,' declared the late Prof. V. S. Apte, one of the founders of the Deccan Education Society, ' with the firmest conviction and belief that, of all agents of human civilization, education is the only one that brings about material, moral and religious regeneration of fallen countries, and raises them up to the level of most advanced nations, by slow and peaceful revolutions.' Another great statesman, connected with the same institution, whose name is better known—Gopal Krishna Gokhale—also stated : ' One of the most anxious, as it is one of the most important, problems confronting us today is how to supply guidance, at once wise and patriotic, to our young men, so that their lives may be directed into channels of high purpose and earnest endeavour, in the service of the Motherland. To sustain, on the one hand, the pure impulses and generous enthusiasms of youth, and on the other, to instil into young minds, a due sense of proportion and of responsibility, and a correct realization of the true needs of the country—this can never be an easy task, and in the present needs of India, it is beset with extraordinary difficulties.' ( O. E. E. ) A still higher aim inspired our great poet Rabindranath Tagore to found his unique Vishwa-Bharati, at Shantiniketan, with its adjunct of Sri Niketan.

Tagore, by his own confession, was a truant at school, and broke away from the stifling atmosphere of the imported variety of educational institutions. ' It was impossible,' said he, ' for a child to be able to receive anything in these cheerless surroundings, in the environment of dead routine.' The surroundings were ' dead, unsympathetic, disharmonious and monotonously dull.'

His own experiment was intended to remedy all this, and even attempted something more: *viz.*, to provide a nucleus for working out a synthesis of world-culture. His dissatisfaction with the existing institutions did not lead him to orthodox experiments, of the type of the Gurukuls, which even an ardent Arya Samajist like Lala Lajpat Rai declared 'out of date and antiquated:' 'to adopt them will be a step backward, not forward.' ( P. N. E. 45 )

The highest aim of education, according to the poet, 'is to help us to realize the unity of all knowledge, and all the activities of our social and spiritual being.' This is the true teaching of our Indian heritage, often lost sight of by some modern Indians 'who believe that the past is the bankrupt time, leaving no assets for us, but only a legacy of debts.' They refuse to believe, says Tagore, 'that the army which is marching forward can be fed from the rear. It is well to remind such persons, that the great ages of renaissance in history, were those when men suddenly discovered the seeds of thought in the granary of the past. The unfortunate people who have lost the harvest of their past have lost their present also. They have missed their seed for cultivation and go begging for their bare livelihood. We must not imagine that we are one of these disinherited people of the world. The time has come for us to break open the treasure-trove of our ancestors, and use it for our commerce of life. Let us with its help make our future our own, and not continue our existence as the eternal rag-pickers of other people's dust-bins.'

Rabindranath looked at the East and the West in this spirit. He was no narrow nationalist, though he drew most of his inspiration from India's past. That past taught him that spiritual training was not something

exclusive detached from life, but a part of life itself. ' Our centre of culture,' he therefore said, ' has the ideal, not only to be the centre of the intellectual life of India, but the centre of economic life also. It co-operates with the villages around it : cultivates land, breeds cattle, weaves cloth and presses oil from oil seeds ; it is gradually producing all the necessities of life, devising the best means, using the best materials, and calling science to the aid. Its very existence tends to depend upon the success of its industrial activities, carried out on the co-operative principle, which unites the teachers with the villagers of the neighbourhood, in an active bond of necessity, studying their crafts, inviting them to the feasts, joining them in works of co-operation for common welfare ; and in our intercourse we are guided, not by moral maxims only, or the condescension of social superiority, but by natural sympathy of life for life, and by sheer necessity of love's sacrifice for its own sake. In such an atmosphere, students naturally learn to understand, that Humanity is a divine harp with many strings, waiting for its one Grand Music. Those who realize this Unity are made ready for the pilgrimage, through the night of sacrifice, to the great meeting of MAN in the future, for which the call comes to us across the darkness. ' ( E. U. 16-8 )

To this communion, the poet invited *savants* and idealists, from East and West — like Sylvain Levi and Tan Yun-shan—and they ' stretched their arms towards perfection,' and ' deemed their dignity increased. ' To speak only of one important branch of this activity, the Cheena Bhavan at Shantiniketan helps us to realize the poet has really succeeded in recapturing in the Vishwa-Bharati the spirit of international fellowship—*Vasudhaiwa kutumbakam*—breathed by our ancestors.

This has, indeed, made Vishwa-Bharati our New Nalanda. The ideal of Cheena Bhavan — and its counter-part, the Sino-Indian Cultural Society of Chungking—is stated to be ‘to study the mind of India and China with a view to an interchange of their cultures, and cultivation of friendship between the peoples of the two countries, for the purpose of promoting peace and unity in the world.’

At the inauguration of the Bhavan, Chiang Kai-shek stated in his message to Gurudev: ‘We are eager to co-operate with you for the promotion of oriental culture and civilization. In order to bring about peace and happiness to humanity, and to lead to greater harmony of the world.’ These sentiments were supplemented with generous donations to Shantiniketan, and a visit to India by the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang in 1942. India too reciprocated by sending to war-torn China her historic Medical Mission, as well as by the visits of eminent Indians like the poet himself, Radhakrishnan, Jawaharlal and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya to that country. ‘We traded in ideas, in culture,’ said Nehru in a message to Cheena Bhavan, ‘and grew richer in our inheritance by the other’s offering.’ In the memorable words of the President of the Chinese Republic, uttered during his visit to India, ‘China and India comprise one-half of the world’s population. Their common frontiers extend over 3,000 kilometers. In the 2,000 years of history of their intercourse, which has been of a purely cultural and commercial character, there has never been an armed conflict. Indeed, nowhere else can one find so long a period of uninterrupted peace between two neighbouring countries. This is irrefutable proof that our two peoples are peace-loving by nature. . Today they have not only identical interests,

but also the same destiny. For this, they are in duty bound to side with the anti-aggression countries, and to fight shoulder to shoulder to secure real peace for the whole world'.

Tagore travelled over the whole world, and it is doubtful whether any other Indian has ever visited so many lands, with such diversity of cultures, as the poet did. He went out as an Indian, 'preaching the same message, again and again,...longing for emancipation from the chains of dead matter, speaking to white, black and yellow, in the same language—probably a unique linguistic synthesis of poetic flights and common sense—with the simplicity of a child and a prophet. Wherever he went, he was received with the same unbounded, almost delirious, enthusiasm. His picture was flashed across continents and oceans. He travelled in special trains, put at his disposal by the Fascist Government of Italy, and went to Russia on a special invitation of the Soviet Government; he was the guest of Presidents of democratic republics, of kings, both before and after their abdication, of the greatest men of letters and science. We see him speaking to audiences of many thousands, and to millions through the radio. His portrait has been painted by several hundreds of artists: his bust could be seen in almost all the exhibitions of the outstanding sculptors of the world. And yet, wherever he went, he wanted to see the children; perhaps he felt they were the only ones who understood him.' (R. W. E. XII) Did not Jesus say: 'Be ye like unto children?' How can those who have lost their freshness, and become robots, respond to any human call? However, Tagore's visit to Russia revealed to him that the Soul of Man was still alive in that most revolutionary heart of Europe.



Though he was there only for a fortnight, during September 1930, Rabindranath tried to get into touch with all classes of people — peasants, women and children. He had intimate talks with them, and elicited valuable information from his interlocutions. He was mainly interested in their educational ideas, methods and institutions; but he also saw their cinemas, theatres, art-exhibitions, and listened to their folk-music. Prof F. N. Petroff, President of the Cultural Relations Society - VOKS - told him: 'This rebuilding of society, on a basis of equality, is an inevitable consequence of the existence of numerous tribes and castes in Russia. We have had to deal with this baffling problem of heterogeneity, all through our history. The attempt to realize that our differences are negligible, in the light of a common need, and a common urge of civilization, has imparted a great enthusiasm to all our workers; and we fervently believe that we shall be able to offer definite solutions to many of the outstanding problems which have troubled humanity in the past.' The Professor also added: 'Our Soviet culture is of interest at the present stage of revolutionary creation, inasmuch as, emancipating *both materially and spiritually* the many races inhabiting the U. S. S. R., it has enabled the masses.....to apply their powers and their energy to the progress of all humanity.' Another Russian, Prof Kristy, Director of the Tretiakov Gallery, said: 'We are glad that our guest has come to us at the moment when his own native-land is on the eve of emancipation, and that he has come to us when we are ourselves making heroic efforts for the reconstruction of our *material and spiritual* world.' (T. R. 2, 6, 23)

Rabindranath confessed to the great difficulties of understanding the truth about Russia through external



agencies. That was why he had gone there to see things and learn for himself. He was particularly interested to know 'how the human personality can, in the conditions of socialist reconstruction, perfect itself and become a veritable force in the spheres of art, science, and human progress of every description.' From what he had witnessed, he was able to say: 'I am struck with admiration by all that you are doing to free those who once were in slavery, to raise up those who were lowly and oppressed,...reminding them that the source of their salvation lies in a proper education and their power to combine their human resources.' At the same time he was equally candid in his criticism and advice.

'Don't you believe,' he asked them, 'that much of what you do today has behind it the accumulated forces of active reaction against the oppressive regime of the past government?' He observed certain contradictions to the great mission of Russia to extirpate all social evils by going to their very roots. Such as it was, he said: 'Are you doing a service to your ideal by arousing in the minds of those under your training, anger, class-hatred, and revengefulness against those not sharing your ideal, against those whom you consider your enemies? Your mission is not confined to your own nation or party; it is for the betterment of humanity according to your light. But does not humanity include those who do not agree with your method?' He, therefore, pleaded with them: 'Just as you try to help peasants who have other ideas than yours about religion, economics and social life, not by getting fatally angry with them, but by patiently teaching them and showing them where the evil secretly lurks; should you not have the same patience for those other people who have other ideals than

your own? You may consider them misguided. But it should be all the more your mission to try to convert them by pity and love, realizing that they are as much a part of humanity as the peasants whom you serve.' He warned them that if they continued in the spirit of hatred and revengefulness, they would be creating a vicious atmosphere which would react against their ideal and ultimately destroy it. 'You are working in a great cause. Therefore you must be great in your mind, great in your mercy, your understanding and your patience. I feel profound admiration for the greatness of the things you are trying to do; therefore I cannot help expecting for it a motive-force of love and an environment of charitable understanding.'

There must be disagreement where minds are allowed to be free, he pointed out further. 'It would not only be an uninteresting, but a sterile world of mechanical regularity, if all opinions were forcibly made alike\*... Freedom of mind is needed for the reception of

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\* That these remarks are still applicable to the U.S.S.R., even after the salutary reforms of 1936, will appear from the following observations of Beatrice Webb whose *obiter dicta* on Russia may not be impugned: 'There is however a type of suppression of free thought, by word and by writ, that is absent from capitalist democracies, but is indisputably present in the U.S.S.R. No criticism of the living philosophy of the Communist Party is permitted in the Soviet Union...I see no reason to doubt that with the increased prosperity of the Soviet Union, whose living philosophy depends for its realization on the scientific method, will gradually lift the bar to free discussion in the press about rival conceptions of political and economic systems, if only to increase the prestige of the new civilization among the intelligentsia of other countries...'—*The Truth about Soviet Russia* by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, pp. 48-49. (Longmans, New ed. 1944)

truth ; terror hopelessly kills it ... ' Therefore, he finally appealed to them, ' for the sake of Humanity, I hope that you may never create a vicious force of violence, which will go on weaving an interminable chain of violence and cruelty. Already, you have inherited much of this legacy from the Tsarist regime. It is the worst legacy you possibly could have. You have tried to destroy many of the other evils of that regime. Why not try to destroy this one also? I have learned much from you, how skilfully you evolve usefulness out of the helplessness of the weak and ignorant. Your ideal is great, and so I ask you for perfection in serving it, and a broad field of freedom for laying its permanent foundation. ' ( T. R. 341-42 )

Here we witness the meeting of the East and the West in the personality of Rabindranath Tagore in Russia. He appeared to talk to them with a voice that came down from ancient India, from the time of Asoka and Buddha. Was it the voice of reaction, because it derived from the past ? Was it not rather the deep voice of one who had dedicated his whole life to the realization of world-synthesis ?

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## CHAPTER XI

### TOWARDS FULFILMENT

*You will find yourselves everywhere in India between an immense past and an immense future, with opportunities such as the old world could but seldom, if ever, offer you.*

MAX MULLER

We have now arrived at a position, we hope, whence we might confidently visualize the future, in spite of its baffling character. Most thinkers seem to agree that it cannot be entirely in the way of the West, for it is fraught with dangers. Nor could it be along the somnolent path of the ancient East, for a tree does not grow towards its roots. But we maintain that it is equally obvious that no tree can live apart from its roots. Its crown might make towards the Pole Star, its branches might reach out to the very corners of the universe, but if it is to live at all, it must continue to be fed from its native soil and climate. In fact, the larger its outer growth the deeper should be the penetration of the roots in order to stabilize its life ; to that extent the sap will flow more vigorously in all its ramifications. The ground on which the sapling stands may appear to be dense and dark, as compared with the sky and the circumambient air, but the living tree knows no such contrasts and contradictions. It thrives because of Synthesis and not Antithesis. This is the essence of our Indian outlook. We do not, therefore, accept the distinction that is often made between the East and the West.

‘Where will the sun next rise? ask some. Of course in the East. Then may not the East be proud of that privilege? But where is the East? There cannot be an unequivocal answer; for did not the redoubtable Columbus sail West to reach the East? Birbal the wise told Akbar the intellectualist: ‘Too far West is East: too far East is West.’ We thus come to understand the paradox of the poet who sang :

Sunset smiles on sunrise,  
East and West are One !

The ancient Chinese Fa Hian and Hiuen Tsang called India ‘the Western country.’ We refer to Europe and America as the West. But, for the Americans, the Atlantic Ocean, which stretches between Europe and America, is ‘eastern’ not ‘western’; the sun rises on their Atlantic coast and sets on their Pacific coast. The Pacific is, therefore, the Western and not the Eastern ocean, though the Japanese might very reasonably contradict this nomenclature and insist on speaking of the Pacific East. Our publicists do not, however, care much for this logic of the compass : they will always continue to write, even in India, about the Middle ‘*East*’ when they refer really to our ‘*Western*’ neighbours.

The common sense about the relativity of all this appears to have been noted by the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (Haug, ii. 242) and Aryabhatta who said that ‘the starry vault is fixed; it is the earth which, moving on its axis, seems to cause the rising and the setting of the planets and stars.’ (Colebrooke, ii. 392) The sun appears to rise in the East, because the earth spins on her axis from West to East. East and West are therefore misleading terms: LIGHT is all that matters. It may not, when it comes, enter only through the

eastern window. Nor may the West refuse to share it when it does come from the East. 'He was the watcher in the night,' writes our poet, 'who stood on the lonely peak, facing the East, and broke out singing the paeans of Light to the sleeping world, when the sun came out on the horizon. "The Sun of Truth is for all," he declared; its light is to unite the far and the near!'

Surveying our contemporary world dispassionately, what is it that we find? World War II has closed, leaving behind it 'atomic research' and the search for PEACE. Thoughtful men might anxiously ask: 'Can we really find the Pot of Gold at the foot of a rainbow?' The wrangling at the Peace Conference, and the desperate search for something deadlier than the atom bomb, do not seem to augur PEACE. 'Balance of Power' leaves no balance of Hope. In the ultimate analysis, it will be discovered that the struggle is between the Left and the Right, more than between the Big Powers and the rest; for there is a greater lack of harmony of interest, as well as understanding, among the TROIKA: Russia *vs* the Anglo-American Axis. Power Politics do not lead to Peace. But the people will not wait until the politicians square the circle. They are moving faster every day from *Right* to *Left*, despite the dogged faith of the reactionaries that 'Left can never be Right.'

Shall we then also declare unhesitatingly for the Left? If this means being out and out for Russia, we should pause for a while and think more fundamentally. We cannot be against Russia, because that is the only great country where Asia and Europe, East and West, really and literally meet. She occupies a sixth of the surface of the globe, though between China and India we have half

the world's entire population. What an unshakeable anchor of Peace shall we be able to build up if Russia and India could together evolve a New Synthesis! Russia may not represent the whole of the West; but India certainly stands for Asia more truly. The unity between India and China is not a mere aspiration but an accomplished historical fact, as we have seen in the last chapter. The sentiments recently expressed at the Inter-Asian Relations Conference at Delhi are but the latest reminder of our family ties with the rest of Asia. Even Japan, despite her grievous blunders and wrongs, in her still rankling past, may not be despaired of. As Tagore stated in his famous letter to Noguchi: 'True Asian humanity will be reborn. Poets will raise their song and be unashamed – one believes – to declare their faith in a Human Destiny, which cannot admit of scientific mass-production of mass-fratricide.' If this is a dream, it is a dream worth cherishing, as an antidote against our contemporary nightmares. For Faith is constructive. The Inter-Asian Conference, above referred to, may prove the harbinger of a heart-unity more real than the fake UNOs of history.

Much will depend upon Russia and India. Walt Whitman once sang with reference to our country :

To us.....the Originatress comes,  
The nest of languages, the bequeather  
of poems,—the race of old...  
The race of Brahma comes!

Our scale of values is well known. Can it supply the basis for a lasting world-synthesis? This, too, will depend upon the extent to which the ideologies of Russia and India are capable of being harmonized. To be categorical is to be dogmatic, doctrinaire : that way leads to delusion, even though it be self-delusion. Let us try to



understand even our differences, that we might overcome them. Romain Rolland and Rabindranath Tagore, it appears to us, have paved the way to such an understanding.

Rolland, it is well known, was a pacifist and mystic, yet he had faith in Russia. 'The Russian experiment appeared to him clothed in the transcendent glory of a religious crusade against sham, oppression and inequality...In Russia the hope of humanity was henceforward centred.' (M. R. Feb. 1945, 81) We have already noted Tagore's impressions about Russia, in the previous chapter. He was genuinely appreciative, but more critical. He had the courage of his convictions and told the Russians: 'You have, of course, as I am sure you will freely admit, made grievous mistakes at the time of your first accession to power; but the sense of responsibility that this power has brought along with it, has given you a full sense of reality, and you seem to lose no opportunity now of merging your racial individualities into a harmonious social existence.' (T. R. 3) In his last message to Tan Yun-shan he said: 'Tell your young people that they should not blindly imitate the U.S.S.R. If you imitate blindly, you will get no benefit but disadvantage.' (M. D. 9) This may be considered to be the typical Indian reaction.

To cite another important example of indetical impression, Pandit Nehru—who began with the enthusiasm of the romantics who felt about the French Revolution in its Prelude:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very Heaven!

—has come to soberer conclusions finally. These are worthy of the most thoughtful consideration.

M Stalin's declaration of November 1942, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Soviet Revolution, was reassuring. It envisaged 'abolition of racial exclusiveness, equality of nations and restoration of their sovereign rights, the right of every nation to arrange its affairs as it wishes, economic aid to nations that have suffered, and assistance to them in attaining their material welfare, restoration of democratic liberties, the destruction of the Hitlerite regime.' (D.I. 598) The changes, social and economic, brought about by the tremendous revolution, must remain. They were essentially international in their scope and outlook. Nevertheless, recently, nationalism has reappeared in Russia, though 'in a way that fits in with the new environment and adds to the strength of the people.' But, while Russia is thus forging new links with her national tradition, Communist Parties in other countries are drifting farther away from it. 'I cannot speak with much knowledge,' writes Pt Jawaharlal, 'of what is happening elsewhere, but I know that, in India, the Communist Party is completely divorced from, and is ignorant of, the national traditions that fill the minds of the people. It believes that communism necessarily implies contempt for the past. So far as it is concerned, the history of the world began in November 1917, and everything that preceded this was preparatory and leading up to it. Normally speaking, in a country like India, with large numbers of people on the verge of starvation, and the economic structure cracking up, communism should have a wide appeal; but the Communist Party cannot take advantage of it, because it has cut itself off from the springs of national sentiment, and speaks in a language which finds no echo in the hearts of the people. It remains an energetic but small group, with no real roots.' (D. I. 628-29)

There are also others, he points out, 'who talk glibly of modern ways, but lack all true appreciation of the modern spirit and the essence of western culture, and are, at the same time, ignorant of their own culture. Unlike the Communists, they have no ideal that moves them, and no driving force that carries them forward. They take the external forms and outer trappings of the West ( and often some of the less desirable features ) and imagine that they are in the vanguard of an advancing civilization. Naive and shallow, and yet full of their own conceits, they live chiefly in a few large cities, an artificial life which has no living contacts with the culture of the East or the West.'

It is well, therefore, to remember that national progress can neither lie in a repetition of the past, nor in its denial. 'New patterns must be integrated with the old. Sometimes the new, though very different, appears in terms of pre-existing patterns, thus creating a feeling of continuous development from the past—a link in the long chain of the history of the race. Indian history is a striking record of changes introduced in this way—a continuous adaptation of old ideas to a changing environment, of old patterns to new.'

Contemporary India bears ample evidence of this process of adaptation of 'old patterns to new.' The most striking illustration of it is, undoubtedly, the Gandhian experiment in its widest comprehension. It has sought to bring about vast and radical changes in the social, political, economic and moral spheres. In fact, it aims at as comprehensive a revolution as that of Soviet Russia, but its method is not that of Marx or Lenin; it is that of the Buddha and Asoka. It has, therefore, attracted much attention, wherever men have applied the most anxious attention to the permanent

healing of the wounds of modern civilization. Unfortunately, some of the men, too much obsessed with their own local *milieu* in India, have failed to grasp and appreciate what thoughtful outsiders have noted with interest. If humanity is to reconcile progress with peace, and enjoy wealth without necessarily sacrificing the welfare of millions in its acquisition, it is worth while thinking seriously of the significance of what Gandhiji has been urging. For this, the first step is to divest oneself of all personal prejudice, *depersonalize the Gandhian idea*, and look at it as 'a blue-print' of national and world reconstruction.

'The name of Gandhi even in his life-time,' Pearl Buck has significantly remarked, 'has passed beyond the meaning of an individual to the meaning of a way of living in our troubled modern world.' (MG: E. R. 63) Richard Gregg has likewise spoken of Gandhiji as 'a great scientist in the realm of social truth,' and hence his experiments have a larger significance than what is suggested by their Indian context. (ib. 80) Professor Ernest Barker of Cambridge University has been attracted by Gandhiji chiefly as one 'who could mix the spiritual with the temporal and could be at the same time true to both.' 'I should also celebrate the man,' he writes, 'who could be a bridge between the East and the West, and thereby could render one of the greatest services which it is possible to render to the cause of international understanding.' (ib. 61)

The dominant idea for which Gandhiji stands is, of course, AHIMSA. For him, personally, it is a synonym for 'Truth which is God.' But others who do not share with him this religious belief are not blind to the value of its human application. Edward Thompson, for instance, has observed: 'He will be remembered

as one of the very few who have set the stamp of an idea on an epoch : that idea is "non-violence". When all has been said by the extreme propagandists of both sides, he adds, 'its conduct justifies a guarded belief that its outcome may be a sane and civilized relationship' between countries like India and England. ( ib. 294 ) C. E. M. Joad is more categorical in his evaluation of Gandhiji's contribution. 'The experiment of Civil Disobedience inspired by moral force,' he writes, 'has an immense significance for the contemporary West.' 'Is there no way,' he asks, 'for a nation engaged in dispute to demonstrate the superior rightness of its cause, except by killing off as many members of the opposing nation as it can contrive ? To Gandhi belongs the credit of having had the wit to suggest and the courage to act upon another answer. Christ and Buddha, he said, in effect, are right...It is this method, theoretically as old as human thinking, which Gandhi sought—it is his supreme claim to our gratitude—to apply to the conduct of human affairs.' ( ib. 158-9 )

If it is not as old as 'human thinking', certainly *Ahimsā* is at least as old as Lao Tze and Buddha as is too well known. But the peculiarity of its Gandhian application lies in his conviction that 'Life can only be understood backwards, but *it must be lived forwards*.' This is also the significance of his attempt to combine religion and politics. Politics bereft of religion, according to him, are a death-trap, because they kill the soul. His conception of religion is not that of the ritualist ; it is identical with that of Swami Vivekananda as witnessed in the previous chapter. 'I recognize no God,' he says, 'except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. I worship the God

that is Truth and the Truth that is God *through the service of the millions.*' This is the secret of his success in the political field. As O'Malley has put it, 'He struck a note which vibrates in the hearts of Hindus by declaring that Rama Raj would return.'

Women, especially in the East, are considered the most conservative section of society. Gandhiji's success in drawing them out into the active field of national service, therefore, may be regarded as a mark of the effectiveness of his ideology. In the words of O'Malley again : 'His call appealed to the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion which is deeply rooted in the hearts of Indian womanhood, and had a remarkable response. Thousands came out of *purdah* and volunteered for active service, some of them enrolling themselves in a women's corps called *Desha Sevika* or servants of the country. Gently nurtured ladies undertook menial and other work which would ordinarily have been considered degrading or unwomanly, but was now regarded as patriotic service. They attended public meetings, joined in processions, picketed shops, and cheerfully courted arrest and imprisonment, feeling that they were martyrs to their cause. The customs of centuries were not merely undermined, but shattered in a few years by the explosive force of nationalism. When the unrest subsided, some returned to the seclusion of their homes, but a great number did not. Having tasted the sweets of liberty and enjoyed freedom of action, they were unwilling to resume a sheltered but torpid life. The shock given to the *purdah* system shows no signs of weakening among the educated classes in the cities, where women now go to restaurants, cinemas and other entertainments in numbers, which, though small, would have been unthinkable ten years ago.' (M. I. W. 102 )



This transformation of the psychology of Indian womanhood is symbolic of the great metamorphosis of Mother India herself. We are not here concerned, as we have made it clear before, with the personal triumphs of Gandhiji as an individual ; our interest lies in the applications of his philosophy to life. But it is almost impossible to keep these two aspects apart. Even if we should turn to a great institution like the Indian National Congress, we cannot escape from the personal impress of Gandhiji. Prof Coupland writes : Mr Gandhi is not merely the most famous Indian of modern times ; he is the maker of the Congress as it is today. For what gave the Congress its present strength was its conversion from a movement of the intelligentsia into a movement of the people ; and that was Mr Gandhi's doing, almost single-handed. No other Congressman could have won more than a fraction of the Mahatma's hold on the popular imagination. If then, " he dominates to some extent the Congress "—to quote Pandit Nehru's words—" it is because he dominates the masses...and he will retain the dominating place in the hearts of the people so long as he lives, and afterwards. " ' ( N. R. ii. 92 )

The success of Gandhiji is the success of the ancient Indian ideal ; but its scope and sphere are not confined to the geographical limits of India. ' I believe, ' Gandhiji wrote in 1928, ' my message to be universal ; but as yet I feel that I can best deliver it through my work in my own country. If I can show visible success in India, the delivery of the message becomes complete. ' ( Y. I. 26th April ) Who can deny today, in June 1947, that the message has been delivered, and delivered effectively, so far as India is concerned ?



We are indeed on the threshold of a New Era, though we cannot prophesy the exact 'shape of things to come.' There are all sorts of 'plans' in the air: the Bombay Plan and the Peoples' Plan, for example. There is also a National Planning Committee. But, if we are not to be 'more planned against than planning,' it is necessary to cast away indifference and act betimes, believing in Plato's dictum, that 'wise men who shirk their responsibility of shouldering the tasks of government are punished by having to submit to the government of wicked men.' In other words, we should make sure that the few do not plan (or plot?) for the millions, in their own selfish interest. Even well-meaning plans miscarry, when they are half-heartedly executed, as the League of Nations demonstrated. It also failed, perhaps more so, on account of the lack of honesty on the part of some, and want of courage on the part of others:

I know the right, approve it too,  
Condemn the wrong, yet the wrong pursue.

The bifurcation into Big and Smaller Powers, and their mutual distrust and rivalries—which unfortunately still continue—were not a little responsible for the ultimate result. For nations have, even today, no friends but only interests. Hence the rise of Hitler and Mussolini with their 'plans' of a New World Order in Europe, and of Japan with her Co-Prosperity Plan for East Asia. May not a disillusioned world cry: 'Save us from these planners!'

Our new statesmen might protest: 'We have already hanged the rogues, the War Criminals. We, honest friends of Humanity, are really engaged in finding permanent remedies for all the maladies of mankind.' But behind all this—granting that the protestations are

honest—there are convincing symptoms of the old ideologies still persisting. They are rooted in the faith in the Balance of Power and the efficacy of the Atom Bomb or its deadlier substitutes. In order to realize the insane absurdity of that mania for armaments one has only to quote the doctrine in the very words of its extreme protagonists. Mussolini is reported to have declared: ‘The order of the day is more ships, more guns and more aeroplanes—at whatever cost and by whatever means, even if we have to wipe out completely what is called civilian life.... We desire that nothing more shall be heard of brotherhood, sisterhood, cousinhood, or their bastard parenthoods, because the relations between States are relations of force, and these relations are the determining elements of our policy.’ Hitler had a similar preference for ‘guns’ over ‘butter.’ ‘A ship a day’ was also the boast of the ‘United Nations’ during the War; has that psychology changed since? In spite of temporary moods of ‘repentance,’ there is no genuine ‘conversion’ yet. Apprehensions of World War III are disturbing the peace of the very peace-makers. PEACE cannot rest on the foundations of modern competitive INDUSTRIALISM. Exploitation is writ large on its brow; and exploitation is the fecund mother of wars. Without, therefore, a change of ideologies, there is no salvation for mankind.

This need not necessarily mean the scrapping of Western Civilization. There is certainly much that is valuable in it to be salvaged. We must not throw out the baby with the bath. Only in place of the cramping tub, we might turn on the tap or fountain of perennially flowing water. Remove the congestion in the bathroom and let in some fresh ventilation and light. Nurses are already looking with avidity towards Russia.

There is the promise of salvation in Socialism. Communism or Bolshevism is only socialism coloured red with the blood of slaughtered capitalism. Socialism plus violence is Communism. But could we not collect the little 'golden eggs' without killing the goose? Does honey taste the sweeter for being mixed with the decoction of bees burnt to death in the process of its extraction? Is there no Gandhian brand of honey, non-violently produced, just as there are sandals made from the leather of dead animals — not specially killed for the sake of their flesh or hide? In other words, can we not gather the fruits of human industry without the evils of concentration, competition, and wars?

In a world weary unto death because of the thoughtless pursuit of 'progress,' sheer common sense might suggest some alternative, if only for a trial. The Gandhian prescription differs from that of other doctors, because his diagnosis is different. There appears to be agreement about most of the symptoms—enumerated above; but few have cared to go deeper in search of the cause. Where surgeons have proved butchers in disguise, the physician might still hope to heal.

Detailed applications of the new philosophy to the practical problems of State and Society—in the fields of politics as well as economics, on a local, national and world basis — have been tentatively worked out by the painstaking and erudite Shriman N Agarwal in his *Gandhian Constitution for Free India* and *The Gandhian Plan*. They might call for modifications in some of the details, or adaptation to local conditions in other countries, if the principles are accepted and sought to be applied universally. But immediately, we are here concerned mainly with India. Even for this, Gandhiji has been considered too Utopian, particularly because of his

insistence upon *non-violence* and his alleged objection to the use of *machinery*, construed as a crusade against industrialization. We shall carefully consider both these criticisms in the light of experience, as well as Gandhiji's own statements. Let us all the time remember that he has explicitly said: 'I am humble enough to admit that we can profitably assimilate the West. Wisdom is no monopoly of one continent or one race. My resistance to Western civilization is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption that Asiatics are fit only to copy everything that comes from the West. I do believe that if India has patience enough to go through the fire of suffering and to resist any unlawful encroachment upon her civilization which, imperfect though it undoubtedly is, has hitherto stood the ravages of time, she can make a lasting contribution to the peace and solid progress of the world.' (M. MG. 143)

As for the cult of non-violence, ignoring its individual adoption as a personal creed, with which we are not here concerned, it cannot be gainsaid that its application on a nation-wide scale, during a full quarter century in this country, has yielded very encouraging results. As a wholesome and much needed corrective to its opposite cult of organized violence, which has always resulted in sickening orgies, Gandhiji's technique is yet to be surpassed. We have also to reflect what it would have cost us in blood and material resources—had we the means and the opportunity—to achieve the position we have attained today *vis-a-vis* England if we had instead of non-violence trodden the path of Ireland. One shudders to think of Jallianwala Bagh Calcutta, Noakhali and Bihar; that is where the rejection or repudiation of non-violence will inevitably lead

us. Despite his 'Himalayan blunders', Gandhiji has saved the country from being deluged with blood ; even the partial programme of revolutionary violence, during 1942, acted more as a warning than as an example to be persisted in. The moral contributions of the Gandhian discipline cannot be challenged. Compared with the timid epoch of 'political mendicancy' which preceded it, the New Era under Gandhiji's leadership has produced a race of giants, of men and women marked by a moral stature – individually and in the mass – which could not have been dreamt of under any other system, within so short a time and at such little cost. Against the lurid background of other national revolts splashing the pages of history with the blood of human victims, slaughtered *en masse*, modern India will ever remain a shining exemplar !

Turning to Gandhiji's views on the use and abuse of machinery, we cannot do better than quote him verbatim. Compressing all his pronouncements on the subject, scattered through his speeches and writings, we arrive at the following succinct statement :

'I have no design against machinery as such. What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. Machinery has its place ; it has come to stay. Organization of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few, for the exploitation of the many, I hold to be altogether wrong. Much of the organization of machinery of the present age is of that type. I would categorically state my conviction that the mania for mass-production is responsible for the world crises. The heavy machinery for work of public utility, which cannot be undertaken by human labour, has its inevitable place ; but all that should be owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people. The SUPREME CONSIDERATION IS MAN. Dead machinery

must not be pitted against the millions of living machines represented by the villagers scattered in the seven hundred thousand villages of India. Machinery to be well used has to help and ease human effort. Mechanization is good when hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil where there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages; the problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year.'

M. MG. 119-23

Few reasoning men, if they will not ignore the realities of the Indian situation, and will also want—if that were possible—to avoid the errors of others, would quarrel with this balanced estimate of machinery. It is encouraging to notice that the Indian National Congress, in whose hands lies more and more the shaping of our national destiny, has never gone the whole length with Gandhiji, even while wisely submitting to his sagacious leadership, which has been most salutary in its spirit—either as regards the creed of non-violence, or as regards any other 'utopian fads' of the Mahatma—but true to the Indian tradition, has always tried to steer clear of extreme ideologies, blending a high and ennobling idealism with a clear and firm grasp of the imperious imperfections and hard realities of our modern existence.

India is indeed a land of villages; most of our towns are only enlarged villages. Our cities luckily are few and far between. We have necessarily to build our civilization in the light of these conditions. Our proletariat is as yet small, but the *kisāns* are numerous. It is their country. We eat the bread which they produce. They cannot be ignored or



crushed or crowded out by any industrial proletariat. Neither is it necessary, if we should assign to machinery no more than its legitimate place in our national economy, for us to tread the dangerous path of over-industrialization, simply because other 'progressive' nations have done so. Industrialization of that degree is no more inevitable than the unavoidability of violence as the instrument of national freedom. If we could reach the threshold of liberty from the nadir of slavery and vindicate our national self-respect by the nobler means of non-violence, it should be equally possible for us to shape our economic destiny as well consistently with that humane philosophy.

'The machine,' writes Tagore, 'is also an organ of our vital force, it is man's very own.' We do not seek to destroy it and set back the hands of the clock of modern progress. It might have been abused : but 'if we have caused our hands to commit robbery, the remedy does not lie in cutting them off ; they must be purged of their sin.' ( C. V. 7 ) In a very real sense, the city is the counter-part of the machine, in its relation to human welfare and human happiness. The unbalance of modern civilization is also reflected in the domination of the city over the village. 'Cities there must be,' says Tagore, 'in man's civilization, just as in higher organisms there must be organized centres of life, such as the brain, heart, or stomach. These never overwhelm the living wholeness of the body ; on the contrary, by a perfect federation of their functions, they maintain its richness. But a tumour, round which the blood is congested, is the enemy of the whole body upon which it feeds as it swells. Our modern cities, in the same way, feed upon the whole social organism that runs through the villages ; they continually drain away



the life-stuff of the community, and slough off a huge amount of dead matter, while assuming a lurid counterfeit prosperity.' In less figurative speech, 'The city, which is the professional aspect of society, has come to believe that the village is its legitimate field for exploitation; that the village must, at the cost of its own life, maintain the city in all its brilliance of luxuries and excesses; that its wealth must be magnified; even though that should involve the bankruptcy of happiness.' Finally, he concludes with the remark: 'I am never against progress, but when for its sake, civilization is ready to sell its soul, then I choose to remain primitive in my material possessions, hoping to achieve my civilization in the realm of the Spirit.' (ib. 18-20)

This verily is our Indian outlook. We do not want to 'worship at the shrine of Kubera (Mammon) whose figure is ugly and gross with its protuberant belly, comic in its vulgarity of self-exaggeration: He is the genius of Property that knows no moral responsibility.' (ib. 17) In the forthright language of Gandhiji: 'Economics that hurts the moral wellbeing of an individual or a nation is immoral and therefore sinful.' That this view is also shared by the thoughtful among Western nations is indicated by the following remark of Bertrand Russell who writes in his *Roads to Freedom*: 'If socialism ever comes, it is only likely to prove beneficent if non-economic goods are valued and consciously pursued.' This could be achieved only through decentralization or de-concentration. If Indian reconstruction is carried out in the spirit of these reflections, we shall not only be saving ourselves by our achievement, but also saving the world by our example.

I long to go where all have a living faith in God—  
One loving Father, Lord of all—  
Where lands are vast and all have room to live ;  
Where food and fruit and milk are abundant ;  
And all the good things of life are shared by all ;  
Where all have work to do and none are idle ;  
Where daughters are loved as dearly as the sons ;  
Where wars are unknown, and the skies serene  
Do not rain down poison gas and savage death...  
To that City Beautiful,  
Ferryman, lead me and my countrymen !

### Kashmiri Lyric

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